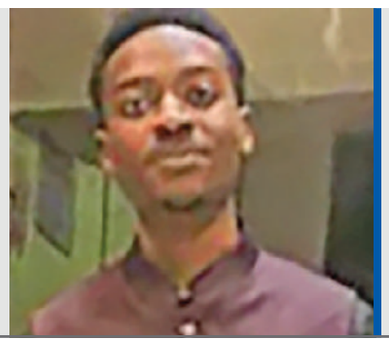
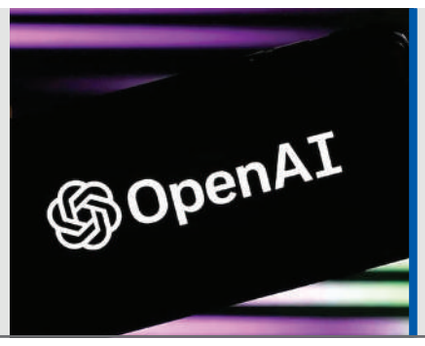
NATION
Beaten with sticks, Zimbabwean student dies in Punjab
≫ Page: 4 ≪



BUSINESS
OpenAI to set up its first India office this year
≫ Page: 7 ≪



SPORTS
India can win AC under SKY's captaincy: Sehwag
≫ Page: 8 ≪

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 23 AUGUST 2025 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 28 SAFAR, 1447 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 230 | Pages: 8

WORDS of WISDOM

I am a staunch Congressman — born into Congress, will remain with Congress as long as I live. My life, my blood, everything belongs to Congress. Today, I stand as one of the pillars of the party

—DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister, dismisses any possibility of aligning with BJP or RSS.

>>>MORE ON PAGE 2

Catch, neuter, release Delhi dogs: SC reverses its order

SC bars feeding dogs on streets, govt must make separate spaces

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Supreme Court on Friday modified its earlier directive banning the release of vaccinated stray dogs from pounds in Delhi-NCR, calling the restriction "too harsh." It has now allowed the release of sterilised and dewormed dogs, while expanding the case to cover all states and union territories.

A three-judge bench led by Justice Vikram Nath, with Justices Sandeep Mehta and N V Anjaria, said all pending high court cases on stray dogs would be transferred to the apex court to formulate a uniform national policy.

However, authorities must continue implementing the 11 August directive to pick up stray dogs from public areas in Delhi, Ghaziabad, Noida, Faridabad and Gurugram, and create appropriate shelters. The directive for permanent relocation of all strays has been kept in abeyance for now.

The Court clarified that only aggressive dogs or those infected or suspected to be infected with rabies should not be released. It emphasised that existing infrastructure and resources must be evaluated be-fore issuing blanket relocation orders.

The bench also directed all municipal authorities to designate feeding zones for stray dogs in each ward, based on dog population. Feeding dogs on streets or public roads is now prohibited, with violators facing punishment. Gantries or notice boards must indicate official feeding spots.

Authorities were ordered to set up dedicated helplines to report violations, and take action against indi-viduals or organisations obstructing compliance. Public officials must be protected from interference, with offenders facing prosecution. The Court encouraged adoption of stray dogs through proper applications to municipal bodies, with adopters bearing responsibility for the animals' welfare. Municipalities must submit affidavits detailing current resources, such as dog pounds, veterinarians, dog catchers, specialised vehicles and cages, to meet Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules.

The Court took up the matter suo motu after a 28 July media report highlighted rising cases of stray dog attacks and rabies among children in Delhi.

The case will be heard again in eight weeks for further directions. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

The Court said that only aggressive dogs or those infected with rabies should not be released **PHOTO: PTI**

'PARTIES MUST HELP PEOPLE'

Accept Aadhaar or any 11 docs: SC to EC on SIR

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to allow voters excluded in Bihar's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls to file claims online or physically using their Aadhaar or any of 11 prescribed documents.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi emphasised that the exercise must be voter-friendly.

The Court asked political parties to assist the people who have been excluded from the draft electoral roll. The bench expressed surprise that Bihar has over 1.60 lakh booth-level agents (BLAs) of political parties, but only two objections have been filed as per the EC

The court directed the Bihar Chief Electoral Officer to implead all recognised political parties in the pro-ceedings.

The ECI submitted that exclusion lists were made public across all polling booths, district offices, and online platforms. It said 85,000 excluded voters had already submitted claims, and over 2 lakh new regis-trations had been received.

The court also directed election officials to provide physical acknowledgement receipts for submitted claims, clarifying that this does not confirm completeness. Congress welcomed the ruling, calling it a "guard-rail" against an obstructive ECI. Jairam Ramesh claimed democracy had "survived a brutal assault." Senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Abhishek Singhvi urged an extension of the 1 September deadline for objections, while Prashant Bhushan flagged challenges faced by migrants. *—PTI*

China's TikTok, AliExpress back in India after 5 years

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

TikTok, banned in India since June 2020 over security concerns, has sparked fresh speculation of a comeback as its website is now accessible to some users. While the app remains unavailable on Play Store and App Store, reports suggest a possible phased rollout. The government had banned 59 Chinese apps, including TikTok, Shareit and CamScanner, during border tensions with China. ByteDance has not issued any official statement. *—Agencies*

Ex-prez Kovind to attend RSS event on 2 October

NAGPUR, 22 AUG

Former President Ram Nath Kovind is set to be the chief guest at the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) annual Vijayadashami celebration on 2 October. The RSS announced the news in a post on X, stating, "The Vijayadashami Utsav, organised on the occasion of the centenary celebration of the found-ing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, will be held on 2 October 2025 at 7.40am at Reshimbagh, Nag-pur. On this occasion, former President of Bharat, Dr Ram Nath Kovind ji, will be the chief guest." RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat will deliver the keynote address during the programme. Each year, the RSS chief addresses 'swayamsevaks' or volunteers from the Reshimbagh ground in Nagpur on Dussehra. *—PTI*

Man held for trying to scale Parliament wall

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

A 20-year-old man was apprehended early on Friday morning after attempting to scale the walls of Par-liament in a security breach at approximately 5.50am. Identified as Ram Kumar Bind, the youth is from Bhadohi in Uttar Pradesh state and works at a factory in Surat and Gujarat. Officials stated that he ap-pears to be "mentally incoherent." *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Prez gives nod for Online Gaming Bill and New IT Act

PHOTO: FREEPIK

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

President Droupadi Murmu has given her assent to the Online Gaming Bill and the Income Tax Act, 2025, marking significant legislative reforms in India.

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, passed by Parliament, aims to ban all forms of real-money games while promoting e-sports and online social gaming. Both Houses cleared the legislation in response to concerns regarding the negative societal impacts of online money gaming. Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated, "This Bill highlights our commitment towards making India a hub for gaming, in-novation and creativity. It will encourage e-sports and online social games," while emphasizing its role in safeguarding society from online money gaming's harmful effects.

Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw termed online money gaming a "public health risk," claim-ing it has led to addiction and financial ruin for millions. "It is estimated that 45 crore people are affect-ed by it, and more than Rs 20,000 crore has been destroyed in it," he said, referencing the serious impli-cations for middle-class youth and families. In addition, the Income Tax Act, 2025, will replace the outdated Income Tax Act, 1961, and will come into effect from 1 April, 2026. This reform aims to simplify tax laws by reducing its complexity and word count. The Income Tax Department heralded it as a "landmark reform," stating it would enhance trans-parency and compliance without imposing new tax rates. The Act reduces sections from 819 to 536 and word count from 5.12 lakh to 2.6 lakh, introducing new tables for clarity. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

BOY STABS CLASS 6 GIRL 21 TIMES IN HYDERABAD

HYDERABAD, 22 AUG

A 10-year-old girl, Sahasra, tragically died after being stabbed 21 times at her home in Hyderabad, allegedly by her 14-year-old neighbour. Police have reported that the attack stemmed from a desire to steal a cricket bat.

The victim, a Class 6 student, was alone at home while her six-year-old brother was at school. The incident was discovered by her father, a bike mechanic, who returned home around midday.

The Cyberabad police, who formed several teams to investigate the case, apprehended the teenage neigh-bour four days after the attack. According to top police sources, the boy has confessed to the crime. "A cricket bat theft is behind the motive," they stated. However, authorities are still questioning why the boy entered the house armed with a knife if his intent was merely theft. The city is left in shock as investigations into this heartbreaking incident continue. *—Agencies*

NRI INDUSTRIALIST LORD SWRAJ PAUL NO MORE

LONDON/NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Leading NRI industrialist Lord Swraj Paul died in London on Thursday, leaving behind a legacy in entrepreneurship and philanthropy. He was 94.

Lord Paul, founder of UK-based Caparo Group of industries was hospitalised recently. Born to Pyare Lal, who ran a foundry used to make steel goods, including buckets and farming equipment, Lord Paul was exposed to business early in his life much before he went on to establish Caparo Group. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 7

Bengaluru civil court receives hoax bomb threat

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

A bomb threat email sent to the Bengaluru City Civil Court on Friday triggered a swift response from Halasuru Gate Police and a bomb squad. A thorough inspection of the premises revealed no explosives, confirming it was a hoax.

Police said the threat resembled a series of recent hoax bomb alerts across the city. On 27 July, similar emails threatened to bomb the office of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and the Kempegowda International Airport. Searches yielded nothing, but caused temporary panic.

Earlier this year, around 40 private schools in areas such as RR Nagar and Kengeri received bomb threat emails from the ID roadkill333@atomicmail.io *—Salar News*

Lanka's ex-Prez arrested for misuse of funds

COLOMBO, 22 AUG

Former Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe was arrested on Friday for allegedly misusing state funds during his tenure as head of state, police confirmed.

Wickremesinghe, 76, was taken into custody at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) headquar-ters in Colombo, where he had been summoned to record a statement regarding the alleged misuse of government resources.

He was later produced before a magistrates' court.

The allegations stem from a trip to the United Kingdom in September 2023, where Wickremesinghe attended a convocation ceremony of his wife, Professor Maithree. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

PHOTO: PTI

SCORNED BY BJP?

Yatnal to launch 'non-adjustment party'

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Expelled BJP leader Basanagouda Patil Yatnal on Friday announced that he would launch a "non-adjustment political party" in Karnataka.

The Vijayapura MLA made the announcement in the assembly after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah high-lighted the state's financial woes and accused the previous BJP government of passing bills without funds during its 2019-23 tenure.

"You (Siddaramaiah) too got support from two of us," Yatnal said, prompting Siddaramaiah to quip, "Please sit down. You have been expelled from the party."

In his response, Yatnal said, "You were also expelled by former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda from the JD(S). Whoever is expelled from a party becomes Chief Minister one day."

- Yatnal was expelled from the BJP for six years after repeatedly targeting former CM BS Yediyurappa and his son, State BJP president BY Vijayendra, over "dynastic politics" and alleging an adjust-ment between Yediyurappa and Siddaramaiah.

Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal **PHOTO: X**

"I will be happy if you become Chief Minister," Siddaramaiah said in a lighter vein.

"But from which party will you do it?" the CM asked and suggested that Yatnal form a new party after his expulsion from the BJP.

"I am going to form a 'Non-Adjustment Political Party'. Don't worry if it cuts BJP's votes. It won't help you," Yatnal responded. Siddaramaiah retorted that Yatnal should launch his outfit if he wanted the Con-gress to come to power.

The firebrand leader was expelled from the BJP for six years after repeatedly targeting former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa and his son, State BJP President BY Vijayendra, over "dynastic politics" and alleging an adjustment between Yediyurappa and Siddaramaiah.

Several BJP legislators had joined his campaign before the party high command acted to quell dissidence. *—PTI*

'Gujarat spent ₹8.81 cr on ads for Modi's 23 years in office'

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Gujarat government spent 8.81 crore on advertisements celebrating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 23 years in public office, according to an RTI response obtained by BBC Gujarati.

The ads, published on 7 October, 2024, hailed Modi's leadership since 2001, with headlines like "23 years of successful and capable leadership" and "Development Week – Gujarat has gained faith in de-velopment".

The Gujarat Information Commission revealed that Rs 2.12 crore was spent on newspaper ads alone, Rs 3.05 crore under the 'Vikas Sapta' campaign, and Rs 3.64 crore on digital, electronic, and social media promotion.

BJP spokesperson Yagnesh Dave said he had no official knowledge of the expenditure but insisted all government spending is audited and compliant with rules.

PHOTO: FB

Legal experts have criticised the spending as misuse of public funds. Notably, a 2015 Supreme Court rul-ing barred the use of public money to glorify political leaders, stating government ads must maintain po-litical neutrality. *—Agencies*

20 stampedes happened in BJP-led states: CM in Assembly

CM doubles down against BJP asking if Yogi quit after Kumbh deaths

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said 20 stampedes took place in the BJP-ruled states, and blamed "mass hysteria" for the Chinnaswamy stadium incident in June that killed 11 people.

Siddaramaiah on expressed deep regret over the 4 June saying the tragedy had "deeply disturbed" him.

Responding to a discussion in the Legislative Assembly, Siddaramaiah rejected the Opposition BJP's demands for his resignation and that of Cabinet colleagues. He said his government had taken swift action, including a judicial probe, suspensions, and legal proceedings.

"I have never seen such a tragic incident in my 42-year political career," he said, noting that the victims were all aged between 13 and 29.

Clarifying criticism that he was at a restaurant during the incident, Siddaramaiah said he only learned of the deaths at 5.30pm on 4 June. "Until then, I was told there was only one casualty," he explained.

Following the tragedy, he ordered a magisterial inquiry and constituted a judicial commission led by retired Justice John Michael Cunha. Both reports were submitted in July. Five police officials, including the then Bengaluru Police Commissioner, were suspended. The Chief Minister;s political secretary was removed, and the Intelligence chief was transferred. Four organisers were arrested, though later granted bail.

The CID has completed its investigation and will file a chargesheet once court permission is obtained.

Refuting opposition charges of abetment, Siddaramaiah said: "Let the people of Karnataka decide." He cited previous stampedes in BJP-ruled states, including the 2008 Naina Devi (162 dead) and Chamunda Devi (250 dead) temple stampedes, and the 2023 Kumbh Mela tragedy in Prayagraj (39 dead).

He questioned whether BJP CMs had resigned or apologised after these events. "Did Yogi Adityanath resign? Did Amit Shah or the Gujarat CM resign after large IPL celebrations in Ahmedabad during Covid?"

Calling for unity and restraint, Siddaramaiah urged leaders not to politicise tragedies. "We don't deny anyone their rightful share. But let's not exploit sorrow for political gain," he concluded.

Opposition BJP members walked out in protest, dissatisfied with the CM's response. *—PTI*

₹5L aid for microfinance harassment deaths

Bengaluru, 22 Aug

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced Rs 5 lakh compensation for families of those who died by sui-cide due to harassment by microfinance agents. Speaking in the Legislative Council, he said the deci-sion followed discussions with the Finance Department and Chief Secretary. Siddaramaiah likened it to aid given to distressed farmers' families, aiming to reduce suicides to zero. Despite the 2024 Karnataka Microfinance and Small Loans Act curbing abuse, JD(S) member CN Manjegowda noted 27 new cases, accusing police of complicity in evictions. *—ANI*

DKS sings RSS anthem, then clarifies

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who is also the Congress state president, took every-one by surprise on Thursday when he sang the RSS anthem during a discussion in the State Assembly on the stampede near Chinnaswamy stadium, which claimed the lives of 11 people.

A sudden musical note amazed the House, which heard the first few lines of the RSS Anthem 'Namaste Sada Vatsale Matrubhoome' as shown in a video of the proceedings. Shivakumar's recital came when the BJP legislators accused Shivakumar of being an 'abettor' of the stampede as he created mass frenzy. They alleged that Shivakumar went to receive the RCB team on their arrival at the Bengaluru air-port, waved the Kannada flag throughout the journey from the airport to the Chinnaswamy Stadium.

Replying to the accusations, Shivakumar said, "I am a member of the Karnataka State Cricket Associa-tion (KSCA) and people there, including the KSCA secretary, are my friends. I am the Bengaluru In-Charge Minister. I had gone to the Airport and Stadium on 4 June. I also held the Karnataka flag, I did wish them (RCB) and I kissed the cup as well. I have done my job".

There is absolutely no question of me joining hands with BJP . I am a dedicated Congressman. I have studied both Janata Dal and BJP in depth. I've also taken time to understand the history and workings of the RSS

—DK SHIVAKUMAR,
Deputy Chief Minister

Leader of the Opposition BJP R Ashoka retorted by reminding Shivakumar that he once said he wore an 'RSS Chaddi'. Much to the amusement of the House, Shivakumar responded by singing 'Namaste Sada Vatsale Matrubhoome……'. The Opposition welcomed the anthem by thumping the table, but there was an absolute silence in the Congress benches. *—Salar News*

CM RENEWS PUSH FOR MEKEDATU RESERVOIR

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday renewed his call for the construction of the Mekedatu balancing reservoir across the Cauvery River, arguing the state is releasing more water to Tamil Nadu than re-quired.

Speaking in the Assembly on the final day of the monsoon session, he said Karnataka is mandated to re-lease 177.25 TMC of water during normal rainfall, but has consistently released more.

Siddaramaiah stressed that the proposed reservoir near Kanakapura in Bengaluru South district, the hometown of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, would store excess water in high-rainfall years. "We could store 67 TMC and use it for drinking water or drought relief," he said.

He questioned Tamil Nadu's continued opposition, urging its Chief Minister to reconsider, stating the Su-preme Court had already upheld Tamil Nadu's entitlement at 177.25 TMC.

"There is no harm in building this reservoir," he added, noting full reservoirs this year due to heavy rains, with Karnataka releasing water from the Cauvery, Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers.

Tamil Nadu has long opposed the project, fearing it would reduce water availability for its farming com-munities. *—PTI*

Fresh FIR filed against YouTuber for hate speech

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 22 AUG

- Sameer sought legal relief by filing an anticipatory bail petition in the Mangaluru District Sessions Court on 19 August.

Legal troubles continue to mount for YouTuber MD Sameer, with a fresh FIR registered against him at Kadur Police Station in Chikkamagaluru. The complaint, filed by Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) member Manju Jain, accuses Sameer of making derogatory remarks about Hindu religious sites on social media.

This comes on the heels of an earlier suo moto case registered at Dharmasthala Police Station, where Sameer was accused of spreading misinformation and inciting communal tensions through an AI-generated video. Despite being summoned for questioning, he failed to appear, increasing the possibility of arrest.

Sameer sought legal relief by filing an anticipatory bail petition in the Mangaluru District Sessions Court on 19 August. The court granted interim bail after hearing the matter.

Sameer's videos have drawn both attention and criticism, with some praising the content while others allege it insults religious sentiments. The Kadur FIR states that his remarks could provoke religious dis-harmony — a serious offence under Indian law. *—Salar News*

Woman jumps into well to avoid collapsing wall

BELAGAVI, 22 AUG

A rain-weakened wall fell on a woman pushing her into a dried well at Bedakihal village in Nippani taluk on Thursday evening. According to reports Madhuri Nitin Jatar was washing utensils outside her house when the wall fell on her. She jumped out of the way to avoid the wall and fell into an open well in the compound sustaining multiple injuries. She was rescued by villagers after a few hours of struggle and was rushed to a private hospital where she was declared out of danger. All the six taluks in Chikkodi division of the district which were listed as 'most drought-hit' have been seeing heavy rainfall for the last five days. ***—Salar News***

Lingayats call for unity ahead of census

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

In a meeting chaired by Forest Minister Eshwar B Khandre, Veerashaiva-Lingayat leaders resolved to ensure accurate community representation in the Social and Educational Survey starting 20 September. In the absence of veteran leader Shamanur Shivashankarappa, it was decided to form a high-level com-mittee to consult religious heads and guide members to uniformly write "Veerashaiva" or "Lingayat" in the survey. Ministers MB Patil and Laxmi Hebbalkar, BJP State President BY Vijayendra, and MP Prabhakar Kore stressed coordinated awareness campaigns. The meeting, held across party lines, aimed to reflect the true numerical strength of the community, with leaders urging clear, consistent entries in religion and caste columns. ***—Salar News***

ED raids Cong MLA in 'illegal' betting case

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has intensified its crackdown on alleged illegal betting and money laundering activities linked to Congress MLA KC Veerendra 'Puppy', his family, and associates. On Friday, ED officials conducted searches at over 30 locations across Karnataka, Goa, Mumbai, and Rajasthan un-der the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Veerendra, 50, MLA from Chitradurga, is accused of running illegal online betting platforms such as King567, Raja567, Puppy's003, and Rathna Gaming. His brother KC Thippeswamy is alleged to operate three Dubai-based firms — Diamond Softech, TRS Technologies, and Prime9Technologies —linked to call centre and gaming businesses.

Casinos in Goa associated with the Veerendra family, including Puppy's Casino Gold, Ocean Rivers Casi-no, Puppy's Casino Pride, Ocean 7 Casino, and Big Daddy Casino, were also raided. The investigation co-vers entities like Pappi Technologies, Ratna Gaming Solutions, Ratna Gold, and Ratna Multi Source, sus-pected of tax evasion, money laundering, and possession of unaccounted wealth.

Veerendra was reportedly detained in Sikkim, where he was vacationing with friends. Despite his ab-sence, ED teams raided four properties in Challakere (Chitradurga district) and homes of his brothers KC Nagaraj and KC Tippeswamy.

In a parallel operation, the ED searched the Bengaluru residence of Congress leader Kusuma, former RR Nagar candidate. Her brother Anil Gowda's home was also raided.

The sweeping action has sparked political ripples in Karnataka, particularly within the Congress. ED sources indicate that further action is likely based on the seized documents and digital evidence, with 16 properties already searched in connection with the case *—Salar News*

BACKWARD CLASSES COMMISSION PREPS FOR SOCIO-EDU SURVEY

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

The Karnataka State Backward Classes Commission (KSBCC) on Friday said preparations for socio-educational survey have begun and it is expected to be finished within 90 days.

"The actual conduct of the survey involves house listing and mapping operations in the first stage. That enables comprehensive counting, numbering of houses in serial order and mapping of all the households across the state that facilitates the enumerators to systematically and scientifically carry out the survey in the second stage,' said Madhusudan R Naik, Chairman of KSBCC in a statement.

Since all the residential households have been connected by electricity, if the households are identified with RR Meter numbers, no houses will be left outside the purview of the survey, he added.

The survey will be carried out during the Dasara school holidays, between 22 September and 7 October. Naik said departments of E-Governance and Energy have developed an app for the survey. He said the meter readers of ESCOMS would 'geo tag' the households that are going to be covered in the survey. *—Salar News*

TWO FRONTS, ONE FIGHT

Members of the All-India Bank Employees Unity Forum protested in Bengaluru on Friday, demanding action against alleged illegal retrenchment and unfair labour practices by ICICI Bank. On the same day, State government employees, who retired between 2022 and 2025, also protest at the Freedom Park, urging the government to implement the 7th Pay Commission for their benefit **PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD**

1.5K spl buses to run on Ganesha Chaturthi

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has announced it will run 1,500 special buses from the City to various destinations across the state to accommodate the increased demand during the Gowri and Ganesha festivities on 26 and 27 August.

In addition to regular schedules, special bus services will also be available on 31 August, a Sunday.

Buses will depart from Kempegowda Bus Station in the City to key locations including

Dharmasthala, Kukke Subramanya, Shivamogga, Hassan, Mangaluru, Kundapura, Sringeri, Horanadu, Davangere, Hubballi, Dharwad, Belagavi, Vijayapura, Gokarna, Sirsi, Karwar, Raichur, Kalaburagi, Ballari, Koppal, Yadgir, Bidar, and to Tirupati, Vijayawada, and Hyderabad.

Additionally, special services from Mysuru Road Bus Station will focus on destinations such as Mysuru, Hunsur, Periyapatna, Virajpet, Kushalnagar, and Madikeri.

The premier services will also be provided from BMTC Bus Station at Shantinagar (TTMC) to Tamil Nadu and Kerala destinations including Madurai, Kumbakonam, and Chennai. *—PTI*

HC ORDERS INDIA POST TO RESTORE SERVICES TO VIHAAN

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

The Karnataka High Court has directed the Department of Posts to immediately resume services to Vihaan Direct Selling (India) Private Ltd, the Indian sub-franchisee of QNET, ending an 18-month suspen-sion that had disrupted product deliveries to customers across the country.

The suspension, imposed in February 2024, was linked to a 2019 advisory from the Ministry of Con-sumer Affairs citing ongoing criminal cases against Vihaan. However, in its final order, the High Court said that unresolved investigations cannot be treated as proof of illegality.

"There is neither a concluded enquiry nor a conclusive finding by any court that declares the activities of Vihaan as prohibited. Pending proceedings cannot be presumptively construed as proof of illegality," the bench observed.

The court also warned that official communications from government departments suggesting wrong-doing before the conclusion of judicial proceedings could prejudice ongoing cases and unjustly harm the company's reputation. *—PTI*

Class 4 girl protests seeking compound wall in school

TUMAKURU, 22 AUG

A Class 4 student from a government school in Beladhara village, Koratagere taluk, has drawn Statewide attention after refusing to attend classes until a compound wall is built around the school playground.

Her bold protest, sparked by concerns over safety and hygiene, went viral on social media, prompting a visit from Senior Civil Judge and Tumakuru District Legal Services Authority Member Secretary, Noorunnisa. Despite efforts to persuade her, the young girl firmly declared: "I will return to school only when a compound wall is built around the playground."

The student said the open grounds are frequently misused by visitors to a nearby marriage hall, who litter the area and create a disruptive and unhygienic environment.

Garbage, dust, and noise make it difficult for students to focus during lessons and exams.

She further highlighted that the playground is often used as a parking lot, posing safety risks and making it unfit for recreation or study.

Moved by her determination, Judge Noorunnisa instructed the head of the Zilla Panchayat to take immediate action.

She has also written to the State Legal Services Authority to support the student's demand.

The young protestor's stand has been widely applauded online as a rare and inspiring call for better infrastructure in rural schools. *—Salar News*

CELEBRATING LITERARY LEGACY

Banu Mushtaq to inaugurate Mysuru Dasara

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday announced that International Booker Prize winner **Banu Mushtaq** will inaugurate the world famous Mysuru Dasara 2025 celebrations.

Celebrated as 'Nada Habba' (State festival), the Dasara or 'Sharan Navaratri' festivities in the "royal city" of Mysuru is expected to be a grand affair this year. "The inauguration of the world famous Dasara this year will be done by International Booker Prize winner Banu Mushtaq. Her story collection 'Hridaya Deepa' (Heart Lamp) got her the prize. A woman from Karnataka getting the International Booker Prize is a happy occasion," Siddaramaiah said.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "Banu Mushtaq has come from the background of struggle for various causes, she has worked in the Raita Sangha, Kannada Chaluvali. She is a progressive thinker. Such a woman has been invited for Dasara inauguration. I have spoken to her."

Noting that Dasara celebrations will begin on22 September, the Chief Minister said this year's festivites will last 11 days, with the concluding day, 'Vijayadashami', falling on 2 October. *—PTI*

Gujarat court withdraws case against BJP ex-MP

AHMEDABAD, 22 AUG

A Gujarat sessions court has allowed the withdrawal of a 29 year old case involving former BJP MP Amritlal Patel, 95, and late BJP leader Mangaldas Patel, accused of pulling the dhoti of then-MLA Atmaram Patel during a public event in May 1996. The incident, dubbed the 'dhotiya kand', occurred after a rally addressed by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The accused were allegedly upset with Atmaram for siding with Shankersinh Vaghela when he rebelled against the BJP. The additional sessions judge approved the prosecution's plea, noting the matter stemmed from an internal party conflict. With both Mangaldas and Atmaram now deceased, the withdrawal was in the larger public interest.—*PTI*

2 J&K govt workers dismissed over terror links

SRINAGAR, 22 AUG

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday dismissed two government employees from Kupwara district for alleged involvement in terror activities. Khurshid Ahmad Rather, a teacher, and Siyad Ahmad Khan, an assistant stockman, were terminated under Article 311(2)(c) of the Constitution after security agencies linked them to Lashkar-e-Taiba operations. Investigations revealed Rather allegedly acted as an overground worker, procuring and distributing arms and narcotics for Pakistan-based handlers, while Khan was caught with an AK-47 and accused of sheltering terrorists and smuggling weapons across the LoC. Officials called their actions a "betrayal of national trust", reaffirming a zero-tolerance policy. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Naxals kill man who hoisted flag

KANKER, 22 AUG

A man who hoisted the Tricolour on Independence Day in a remote village of Chhattisgarh's Kanker district was killed by Naxalites, police said. The victim, Manish Nureti of Binagunda village, was abducted on Monday along with two others by armed Maoists. After holding a so-called 'jan adalat' (people's court), the insurgents executed Nureti and released the others after beating them. A poster left at the site accused him of being a police informer, a claim denied by officials. Police believe Naxalites were angered by a viral video showing villagers, including Nureti, hoisting the national flag and chanting patriotic slogans on 15 August. Authorities have launched a probe. —*PTI*

4 WB officials suspended for poll irregularities

KOLKATA, 22 AUG

The West Bengal government has suspended four officials and initiated departmental proceedings against them for alleged irregularities in the revision of electoral rolls, but has not lodged any FIRs, thereby partially complying with the directives of the Election Commission (EC).The suspensions after Chief Secretary Manoj Pant appeared before the EC in New Delhi, where he was allegedly given a deadline to suspend and initiate criminal proceedings against the officers by filing FIRs. The suspended officials comprise two electoral registration officers (EROs) and two assistant electoral registration officers (AEROs) from South 24 Parganas and Purba Midnapore districts. The suspensions follow allegations of irregularities in the voter rolls of the Baruipur East.—*PTI*

In Bihar, PM flays Oppn over infiltration

Modi uses infiltration-corruption poll pitch to 'save' Bengal, Bihar from Opposition

BEGUSARAI/ GAYAJI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched projects worth over Rs 13,000 crore in Bihar, where assembly elections are due later this year, and charged the INDIA bloc with "trying to protect infiltrators" and shielding those with corruption taint.

Modi inaugurated projects worth Rs 12,000 crore at Gayaji, and also flagged off a couple of trains, includ-ing an Amrit Bharat connecting the central Bihar pilgrimage town to Delhi.

He inaugurated a bridge over the Ganga, for which he flew to Begusarai district in a helicopter, about 120 km away, taking along Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary.

The PM flayed the opposition coalition for criticising the Constitution (130th Amendment) Bill, 2025, and opposing the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, ordered in Bihar by the EC, with the claim that it was "helping" the BJP-led NDA.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a public meeting, in Kolkata, Friday PHOTO: PTI

"We have seen a regrettable situation in which people in seats of power have been running governments from jail, signing files from behind bars, tearing to shreds constitutional propriety," said Modi, referring to former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

The PM drew a contrast with the previous Congress regimes, which saw many scams coming to the fore, and the RJD for its corruption while in power in Bihar.

He said the Congress and the RJD want to protect infiltrators for the sake of their vote bank politics."

The allusion was to one of the stated objectives of SIR being the removal of names of "illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar" from the electoral rolls. The PM also charged the Congress with having been insensitive towards Bihar, alleging that "one of its chief ministers had famously said that he would not allow immigrants from the state to set foot on the soil of his state".

Describing Operation Sindoor he said no terrorist would be spared. —*PTI*

METRO PROJECTS PLANNED WHEN I WAS RAIL MINISTER: MAMATA

KOLKATA, 22 AUG

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who has decided to skip the inauguration of three new metro routes in the city by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, asserted that the projects were planned and sanctioned during her tenure as railway minister.

Modi unveiled Rs 5,200-crore worth infrastructure projects, including three crucial metro stretches, and addressed a public rally.

Banerjee skipped the event over alleged harassment of migrants from West Bengal in BJP-ruled states.

"From the State, I arranged free land, paved roads, arranged rehabilitation of displaced people, removed impediments, and ensured all help in the execution of projects…,"Banerjee said.

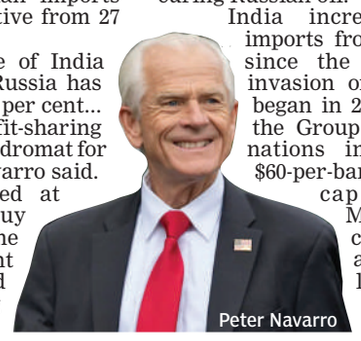
The 13.61 km-long network, spread across the 'Green', 'Yellow' and 'Orange' lines, marks a defining moment in the city's metro journey that began in 1984. —*PTI*

India profiteering by buying Russian oil: US

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

US President Donald Trump's trade adviser, Peter Navarro, accused India of running a profiteering scheme by continuing to import Russian oil. He said punitive tariffs of 50 per cent on Indian imports will become effective from 27 August.

"The percentage of India buying oil from Russia has now gone up to 35 per cent... It's a refining profit-sharing scheme. It's a laundromat for the Kremlin," Navarro said.



Peter Navarro

India has hinted at continuing to buy Russian oil. The Indian government has strengthened its long-standing friendship with Russia and attempted to ease tensions with rivel China.

Foreign Minister S Jaishankar had said India is confused by the US threats, as Washington itself had asked New Delhi to help stabilise global energy markets by procuring Russian oil.

India increased oil imports from Russia since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in 2022, when the Group of Seven nations imposed a $60-per-barrel price cap on Moscow's crude, aiming to limit the Kremlin's energy revenue. US claimed those purchases were to fund Russia's war.

Navarro claimed India produced refined products using cheap Russian oil, are sold at premium prices in Europe, Africa and Asia, he said.

India accounts for 37 per cent of Russia's oil exports.

"What is the net impact on Americans because of our trade with India? They are Maharaj in tariff," he said.

The White House Trade Adviser also accused India of "cosying up to" Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The US has not imposed additional tariffs on China, the largest buyer of Russian crude oil. —*Agencies*

'USAID didn't get USD 21M funds for voter turnout'

EW DELHI, 22 AUG

The US Embassy has clarified that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) did not receive or allocate $21 million for voter turnout initiatives in India between fiscal years 2014 and 2024. This response comes following queries from CPI(M) MP John Brittas regarding reports of USAID funds being used to boost voter participation in Indian elections.

Minister of State for External Affairs, Kirti Vardhan Singh, disclosed in Rajya Sabha that on 28 February the Ministry requested expenditure details from the US Embassy, seeking a comprehensive list of USAID projects in India. The Embassy confirmed that no voter turnout-related activities were funded during this period. —*PTI*

Amit Shah, B Sudershan Reddy PHOTO: PTI

Shah accuses Sudershan of 'aiding' Naxalism

KOCHI, 22 AUG

Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah on Friday accused the Congress-led alliance's Vice-President candidate Justice B Sudershan Reddy of "supporting" Naxalism, saying if he had not delivered the Salwa Judum judgement, extremist Left movement in the country would have ended before 2020.

He was speaking after inaugurating the Manorama News conclave organised by Malayala Manorama group here on Friday.

Shah said that, with the Congress's choice of candidate for the Vice-President post, the party's chances of winning in Kerala have further diminished.

"Sudershan Reddy is the person who helped Naxalism. He gave Salwa Judum judgment. If the Salwa Judum judgement had not been given, the Naxal terrorism would have ended by 2020. He is the person who was inspired by the ideology that gave Salwa Judam judgment," Shah said, referring to 2011 SC judgement on Salwa Judum, during a question answer session as part of the conclave.

In December 2011, Justice Reddy ruled that using tribal youths as Special Police Officers--whether called 'Koya Commandos', Salwa Judum, or by any other name--in the fight against Maoist insurgents was illegal and unconstitutional. He also ordered that they be immediately disarmed.

Meanwhile, Shah said that India will not compromise its farmers or wider national interests in any trade deal with the United States after Washington slapped new tariffs on Indian goods.

He said that no agreement will be signed at the cost of our people. Farmers' interests will not be put at risk. —*PTI*

Trans woman accuses Kerala Cong MLA of attempted rape

T'PURAM, 22 AUG

Fresh trouble brews for Kerala's former Congress MLA Rahul Mamkootathil as trans woman activist Avanthika accuses him of sending 'sexually regressive messages', said sources.

According to sources, the activist alleged that the former MLA had once revealed his sexual desires and rape fantasies to her, adding that no action was taken against him even when the matter was brought to the party's knowledge.

Avanthika, Rahul Mamkootathil PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Sources said, he would call her very often, and during most of their conversations, politics was never a topic. She added that he would often tell her his wish to engage in sexual activities with her, which resembled to rape. There was no immediate response from ex-MLA.

Meanwhile, Congress MP VK Sreekantan's remarks on the women who made complaints of misbehaviour against Mamkootathil landed the parliamentarian in trouble. —*Agencies*

Katju sorry for 'winking' barb after backlash

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Former Supreme Court judge, Justice Markandey Katju, has issued an apology following backlash over a social media post in which he jokingly suggested that women lawyers who "winked" at him received fa-vourable judicial orders. In a follow-up statement, he expressed regret, acknowledging that many female lawyers found the comment hurtful and that he deleted the post shortly after publishing it.

The Supreme Court Women Lawyers Association condemned his remarks as "misogynistic," asserting, "Such comments are not merely offensive but an assault on the dignity, credibility, competence, integrity and professional standing of every woman in the legal fraternity." They described his trivialisation of women's hard work as deeply disturbing, especially from someone formerly entrusted with upholding constitutional values. The Association demanded an unconditional public apology. —*PTI*

IAS body backs CEC amid 'attacks'

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The IAS Officers' Association has expressed disapproval of "unwarranted criticism" and "personal attacks" targeting Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and his family members following accusations of "vote theft" from Opposition leaders. In a statement on social media platform X, the association stressed that such attacks are unrelated to the performance of the official duties.

Gyanesh Kumar, Rahul Gandhi PHOTO: PTI

The statement follows assertions from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who warned CEC and other election commissioners of potential consequences when INDIA bloc forms a government.

"Whatever I say, I do it... I want to tell them that it is Modiji's government right now... Understand one thing, a day will come when there will be an INDIA bloc government," Gandhi stated during a rally in Bihar on 18 August. In light of the allegations, CEC Kumar had previously issued Gandhi a seven-day ultimatum to substantiate his claims. —*PTI*

Man held for trying to scale Parliament wall

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

A 20-year-old man was apprehended early on Friday morning after attempting to scale the walls of Parliament in a security breach at approximately 5.50am. Identified as Ram Kumar Bind, the youth is from Bhadohi in Uttar Pradesh state and works at a factory in Surat and Gujarat. Officials stated that he appears to be "mentally incoherent."

The sources indicate that Bind attempted to gain entry by climbing a tree adjacent to the boundary wall. Multiple central agencies, including the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Delhi Police's Special Cell, are currently questioning him to ascertain his motive. This incident has revived concerns over security following the 2023 breach, wherein individuals released smoke canisters in Parliament during the anniversary of a prior terrorist attack. —*PTI*

Dhankhar reappears, plays tennis

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Jagdeep Dhankhar, who stepped down as the vice president in a surprise move last month, is spending time with his family, as well as playing table tennis and practising yoga.

Dhankhar resigned as the vice president on 21 July, citing health grounds. His sudden resignation had surprised everyone.

An election to pick his successor will take place on 9 September.

Dhankhar picked up table tennis as a hobby when he was the West Bengal governor before being elected as the vice president in August 2022.

He regularly practises yoga and plays table tennis with his well-wishers and staff members at the vice president's enclave.

"Even after returning from tours, he used to play table tennis with his staff members," a person aware of his routine said. —*PTI*

Chaos erupts at Delhi CM's public event

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Chaos unfolded earlier today at a public event attended by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta in the Gandhi Nagar area, marking her first appearance since an attack on her last week. A 60-year-old man, identified as Praveen Sharma, was apprehended for chanting slogans against BJP MLA Arvinder Singh Lovely and creating a disturbance. Sharma, a BJP worker for 40 years, was removed from the venue, but the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Prashant Gautam, confirmed that "Security of the VIP was not breached at any point in time." —*PTI*

AFTER BJP LEADER'S OBJECTION

Signboards with street names in Muslim area of Indore removed

INDORE, 22 AUG

The Indore Municipal Corporation in Madhya Pradesh has removed signboards with new street names in a Muslim-dominated area after a BJP leader said these were tied to a "particular religion."

Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargav said on Thursday that legal action would be initiated against a ward councillor for allegedly renaming the roads illegally. Former BJP MLA Akash Vijayvargiya, son of MP Urban Development and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya, wrote to IMC commissioner Shivam Verma claiming civic employees had put up signboards with "altered names" in Chandan Nagar. He warned of an agitation if the boards were not removed. Mayor Bhargav said ward councillor Fatma Rafiq Khan had got the signboards installed through corporation staff.

The boards were subsequently removed, and legal action was initiated against Khan.

The councillor's husband Rafiq Khan denied the charge, stating they had requested the corporation to install signboards in the locality for public convenience and the names on the signboards had been in use for around 40 years. Khan said while he and his wife had not objected to the removal of the disputed signboards, they would meet the mayor to present their side.

One of the removed signboards carried 'Sakina Manzil Road' alongside 'Chandan Nagar Sector-B Ward No. 2' for the same street, while another street was shown as 'Raza Gate' as well as 'Loha Gate Road'.

Local resident Abdul Wahid Khan said one board displayed 'Gausia Road' along with 'Chandu Wala Road' since both names were commonly used. —*PTI*

BJP consults 100 leaders in hunt for new party prez

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is expected to announce a new National President before the dates for the Bihar elections are revealed, according to sources. The party aims to contest the elections under fresh lead-ership, although the selection process has faced delays due to extensive consultations within the party.

Senior BJP leaders and affiliates from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have solicited input from around 100 prominent figures regarding potential candidates. Discussions have involved former party presi-dents, senior Union Ministers, and leaders connected to the RSS and BJP with constitutional experience.

In addition, state unit elections in key regions like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka must conclude be-fore a new National President can be selected, in accordance with the party's Constitution. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Noted Punjabi actor Jaswinder Bhalla no more

CHANDIGARH, 22 AUG

Renowned Punjabi actor and comedian Jaswinder Bhalla died on Friday morning at the age of 65 following a brain haemorrhage. He breathed his last at Fortis Hospital in Mohali, where he had been admitted two days earlier in critical condition. Bhalla, celebrated for his impeccable comic timing and memorable roles in Punjabi films such as Carry On Jatta, Mahaul Theek Hai and Jatt & Juliet 2, was widely admired for his satirical humour. Tributes poured in from across the political and entertainment fraternity. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and others remembered him as a legend. Bhalla, a retired professor from Punjab Agricultural University, is survived by his actor son Pukhraj Bhalla. *—PTI*

Student's denied admission for criticising Nepali

GANGTOK, 22 AUG

Sikkim University (SU) has cancelled the provisional admission of M.Com student Raj Shekhar Yadav for "gross misconduct" after he allegedly made derogatory remarks about the Nepali language, officials said on Friday. The action followed a disciplinary committee inquiry into complaints from the Sikkim University Students Association (SUSA) and faculty members. Yadav, from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, was accused of posting offensive messages on a departmental WhatsApp group between 14 and 16 August, showing disrespect towards national events and the Nepali community. SU Vice-Chancellor Santanu Kumar Swain accepted the committee's report and revoked Yadav's admission under the Sikkim University Act. Yadav was also arrested last week and booked. *—PTI*

MP man dies of fever, fake doctor booked

INDORE, 22 AUG

Over a year after a 41 year old man's death in Indore, police have filed a case against an alleged fake allopathy doctor, officials said on Friday. Aarti Palwar complained during a Jan Sunwai that her husband, Shyam Palwar, died on 22 May, 2024 after treatment by Pradeep Patel. An investigation found Patel's clinic in the Hawa Bungalow area was unregistered and that he lacked a valid qualification to practise allopathy. He only holds pharmacy and electro-homoeopathy degrees. An FIR has been lodged under the Madhya Pradesh Medical Council Act and Medical Education Institution (Control) Act. Officials said Patel was illegally running both a clinic and a medical shop. *—PTI*

Ganpati association gets Rs 474.46 cr insurance cover

MUMBAI, 22 AUG

Mumbai's GSB Seva Mandal, one of India's wealthiest Ganesh mandals, has taken out a record insurance cover of Rs 474.46 crore for its five-day Ganpati celebrations, starting 27 August at King's Circle, Sion. The 71st year of the festival will see the idol adorned with 69kg of gold, 336kg of silver and other precious offerings. Of the total cover, Rs 67.03 crore protects jewellery, Rs 375 crore provides personal accident insurance for volunteers, priests, cooks, valets and security staff, while Rs 30 crore covers liability for pandals, stadiums and devotees. The policy also includes protection against fire and digital asset loss. The mandal also funds education for underprivileged children. *—PTI*

Activists, NGO must give money for dogs

They must deposit Rs25,000 and Rs 2 L respectively to create facilities

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Supreme Court on Friday asked "dog lovers" and NGOs, which moved against the order of permanent relocation of strays in Delhi-NCR, to deposit Rs 25,000 and Rs 2 lakh, respectively, within a week for being heard in the matter.

The court money should be utilised for creating infrastructure and facilities for stray dogs under the aegis of the respective municipal bodies.

Many NGOs and individual persons moved the apex court seeking a stay of some of its directions.

On Friday, the court delivered its order in a suo motu case initiated over a media report on stray dog bites leading to rabies, particularly among children, in Delhi-NCR region.

The court said that it was the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the stary dogs do not return to the streets *PHOTO: PTI*

"It shall be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the adopted stray dogs do not return to the streets," it said.

Municipal authorities shall continue to comply with the direction to start picking up and rounding stray dogs from all localities in the region.

Meanwhile, animal lovers broke into celebrations at Jantar Mantar on Friday after the apex court's order.

Activists and caregivers hugged each other and raised celebratory slogans. Some thanked god with "Har Har Mahadev."

Many described the ruling as a "victory" of compassion.

"This is a historic day. The court has upheld the right way of caring for community animals," said an animal lover.

Another activist said the judgement brought "immense relief" to those who share a close bond with stray dogs.

"We were very anxious, but today's decision gives us hope on the issue," she said. *—PTI*

"The Supreme Court's judgment is scientific and we are very happy with it."
– Maneka Gandhi, former Union minister and animal lover

"I welcome the Supreme Court's revised directions on stray dogs, as it marks a step toward balancing animal welfare and public safety."
– Rahul Gandhi, Congress Leader

TIMELINE OF THE CASE

The Supreme Court on Friday modified its direction that prohibited release of stray dogs from dog shelters in Delhi-NCR. Here's a timeline of events leading to SC's directive:

28 July:
SC takes suo motu cognisance of a media report after a dog bite case leadito rabies death in Delhi.

11 August:
Noting "extremely grim" situation due to stray dog bites,SC directs authorities in Delhi-NCR to permanently relocate all strays from streets to shelters.

11 -12 August:
Widespread protests break out in Delhi.

13 August:
CJI BR Gavai says he will take up the matter again.

14 August:
SC says the "whole issue" of stray dogs in Delhi-NCR was due to inactionof authorities.

22 August:
SC modifies its earlier direction, allowing the picked up canines to be sterilised, vaccinated and released.

No to plea on mandatory registration of Waqfs

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Supreme Court on Friday declined an urgent plea challenging the mandatory registration of all waqf properties, including waqf-by-users, under the UMEED portal launched by the Centre on 6 June. The portal requires details of all waqf properties to be uploaded within six months. A bench led by Chief Justice BR Gavai noted that orders on key issues under the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, including denotification of waqf properties, are already reserved. *—PTI*

HC to grant relief to single-parent HC judge

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Supreme Court has directed the Jharkhand High Court to allow a single-parent woman judicial officer to either remain in Hazaribagh or be transferred to Bokaro, considering her son's upcoming Class 12 exams. A bench led by Chief Justice BR Gavai stressed that high courts should act like "parents" to their judicial officers. The officer, an ADJ, had challenged the denial of six months' childcare leave and her transfer to Dumka, citing *—PTI*

SC orders status quo in Sambhal mosque row

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered status quo until 25 August in the Sambhal mosque-temple row and issued notices to Hindu petitioners. A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and AS Chandurkar heard the Masjid committee's appeal against the Allahabad High Court's decision upholding a civil court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid. The committee also challenged a second, allegedly illegal survey conducted on 24 November. *—PTI*

FIR baseless; Assam scribe

GUWAHATI, 22 AUG

Journalist and YouTuber Abhisar Sharma has claimed that the FIR registered by Guwahati Police against him over a video was ''completely baseless'' and he will respond to it legally.

Abhisar Sharma *PHOTO: SCREENGRA*

Guwahati police's crime branch on 21 August registered an FIR against Sharma for his video allegedly ridiculing the Assam and Union governments and promoting religious enmity.

''The FIR filed against me by @assampolice is completely baseless. It will be responded to legally!'', Sharma posted on 'X'. In the video Sharma criticised the Assam government giving 3,000 bighas of land to Mahabal Cement. He also highlighted Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's ''communal politics.

Sharma also mocked the principle of Ram Rajya and claimed that the government "survives only on Hindu-Muslim polarisation," the complainant said.

Complainant Alok Baruah, stated that Sharma's remarks were made with mala fide intent to disrepute the Union and Assam governments elected by the people. *—PTI*

Shooter who fired at Elvis Yadav' house held

FARIDABAD, 22 AUG

A shooter involved in the firing outside YouTuber and Bigg Boss OTT winner Elvish Yadav's house in Gurugram has been arrested following a brief encounter near Faridpur village early Friday. The accused, Ishant Gandhi alias Ishu, a resident of Faridabad, sustained a leg injury during the incident and has been hospitalised.

According to police, Gandhi was intercepted by a crime branch team from Sector 30 at around 4.30am while riding a motorcycle. Upon being signalled to stop, he allegedly attempted to flee and opened fire. In response, police shot at his feet, injuring him prior to his arrest.

Gandhi was one of the shooters who fired at Yadav's house . He will be interrogated after being discharged from the hospital. *—PTI*

MAID URINATES ON UTENSILS; HELD

BIJNOR, 22 AUG

Police here have arrested a domestic help for allegedly urinating on utensils while cleaning them at a house in the Nagina area, police said on Friday.

The incident came to light after a video of the accused, identified as Samantra, was circulated on social media. In the purported clip, she can be seen urinating in a glass and sprinkling the same on utensils used by the family.

Station House Officer (SHO) of Nagina Police Station, Sanjay Kumar, said the woman, employed at the house of one Satyam, was arrested after the video surfaced. A family member recorded the video. *— PTI/Agencies*

Pharma gas leak: 4 company officials booked

PALGHAR, 22 AUG

Following a nitrogen gas leak at Medley Pharma in Palghar, Maharashtra, on Thursday that resulted in the deaths of four workers and injured two others, police have registered a case against four senior staff members of the firm. An official from Boisar police station announced the case is filed under section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), concerning "culpable homicide not amounting to murder."

The incident occurred between 2.30pm and 3pm, affecting six workers, four of whom succumbed to their injuries at Shinde Hospital later that day. The deceased have been identified as Kalpesh Raut, 43, Bengali Thakur, 46, Dheeraj Prajapati, 31, and Kamlesh Yadav, 31. The two injured workers, Rohan Shinde, 35 and Nilesh Hadal, 37, remain in critical condition and are being closely monitored in the ICU. Investigations into safety protocol lapses are ongoing. *—PTI*

Beaten with sticks, Zimbabwean student dies in Punjab

The Zimbabwean student was attacked by the security guard of the university along with eight others after an argument *PHOTO: X*

BHATINDA, 22 AUG

A Zimbabwean student, who was allegedly assaulted by a mob on 13 August at at the Guru Kashi University in Bathinda's Talwandi Sabo, has succumbed to injuries, police officials said on Friday.

Ziweya Leeroy was allegedly beaten by Dilpreet Singh, a security guard at the private university and eight others following an argument.

Leeroy died on 21 August at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Bathinda, where he had been getting treatment.

According to police, on 12 August, an argument broke out between Leeroy and the security guard after he found a baseball club in Leeroy's car.

A day later, Dilpreet Singh Singh and his eight other accomplices allegedly attacked Leeroy with sticks, leaving him seriously injured. After the attack, the assaulters rammed their vehicle into a tree and left it behind to flee. It was the vehicle that led to the police to them

A murder charge has now been added to the FIR earlier filed against the nine, eight of whom have been arrested, police said.

The deceased student's parents have been informed about his death. They are however, yet to arrive in India to claim the body. *—PTI/ Agencies*

Class 8 student stabs classmate

BALASINOR, 22 AUG

A Class 8 student was stabbed and injured by a classmate during a dispute outside a school in Gujarat's Mahisagar district, police reported on Friday. The attack occurred on Thursday near the entrance of a government-run primary school. This incident follows a recent tragedy in which a Class 10 student was fatally stabbed outside a private school in Ahmedabad.

Superintendent of Police Jaydeepsinh Jadeja stated, "Based on a complaint given by the victim's father, we have registered an FIR against the accused juvenile. The victim is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital, and his condition is stable."

Police have arrested and charged the accused under sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. *—PTI*

Conversion victims 'abused' at police stn

RAIPUR, 22 AUG

Three alleged victims in the human trafficking and forced religious conversion case that led to the arrest of two Kerala nuns have approached the Chhattisgarh women's commission, claiming harassment and verbal abuse at the Durg Government Railway Police (GRP) station last month.

Chhattisgarh State Women's Commission chairperson Kiranmayee Nayak said that the matter was taken up for hearing, during which complainants were present, while the respondents did not appear. Two Catholic nuns along with a tribal man were arrested on 25 July following a local Bajrang Dal functionary's complaint that they were forcibly converting three women and trafficking them.

The Kerala nuns were arrested at the Durg railway station on alleged charges of human trafficking and forced conversion *PHOTO: PTI*

One of the victims claimed that Bajrang Dal activists had assaulted her and coerced her to give a false statement, a charge denied by the outfit.

- Victims claimed that some anti-social elements forcibly took them from the Durg railway station to the GRP station.

Sukhmati Mandavi, Lalita Usendi and Kamleshwari Pradhan claimed that some anti-social elements forcibly took them from the Durg railway station to the GRP station.

They were molested and given rape threats and subjected to casteist slurs. They even tried to lodge police complaints. *—PTI*

SCARRED FOR LIFE

Biggest wound is treatment in India: Jawan assaulted in UP

A video of the staff of a toll plaza attacking the Army jawan in Meerat in Uttar Pradesh *PHOTO: X*

MEERUT, 22 AUG

Physical injuries will heal with time, but psychological scars will last a lifetime, Army jawan Kapil Panwar, who was brutally assaulted by toll plaza staff in Meerut last week, said on Thursday.

Expressing hurt, Panwar stated that although he has no hesitation in facing enemies at the border, the treatment meted out to him in his own country has left a lasting scar.

"The injuries on the body will heal with time, but the wound to the mind will remain for life," said Panwar, currently undergoing treatment.

The jawan, hailing from Gotka village, was on his way to the Delhi airport for a flight to Srinagar, where he was due to report for duty. He asked the toll staff to allow his vehicle to pass quickly while showing his identity card. The staff allegedly assaulted him with sticks and rods. His relatives who were also in the car, were unable to help because the vehicle's lock jammed.

- Epressing hurt, Panwar stated that although he has no hesitation in facing enemies at the border, the treatment meted out to him in his own country has left a lasting scar.

Kapil's parents have called for strict punishment for those involved.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) imposed a penalty of Rs 20 lakh on the private company and seized its security deposit of Rs 3.70 crore and blacklisted it from operating toll plazas for a year.

Meanwhile, a 15-member team from NHAI's Baghpat division has assumed charge of the Bhuni toll plaza, and cash counters are being reopened.

Eight accused were arrested. Searches are on for the remaining accused, and security arrangements at all toll plazas in the district have been tightened. *—PTI*

KIM GETS EMOTIONAL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un pays homage to North Korean soldiers who died while fighting for Russia against Ukraine, at a ceremony in Pyongyang. It was for the first time ever that Jong Un was seen being emotional as he said, "My heart aches and is bitter as I face the reality that I only get to meet the noble figures who gave up their precious lives for great victory and glory through photos on the memorial wall"
PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Is India fixing China, Russia relations amid US friction?

New Delhi has been trying to rebuild ties with Beijing, while continuing its close energy and defense partnership with Russia, amid steep US tariffs on Indian goods.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed "steady progress" in relations with China after meeting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Tuesday.

Modi on X said, "I look forward to our next meeting in Tianjin on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. Stable, predictable, constructive ties between India and China will contribute significantly to regional as well as global peace and prosperity."

Relations between India and China soured after a deadly border clash in 2020, triggering a yearslong standoff between the two nuclear-armed Asian giants.

But Beijing and New Delhi have been trying to rebuild ties over the past year.

In New Delhi, Wang held talks with his counterpart S Jaishankar and other senior officials, and the two sides achieved a string of diplomatic breakthroughs. They agreed to resume direct flights, boost trade and investment, facilitate business and cultural exchanges, as well as issue journalist and tourist visas.

"This outreach is not directed against any country but is aimed at creating a more peaceful and predictable environment along our border," said Meera Shankar, a former Indian ambassador to the US.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed 'steady progress' in relations with China after meeting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi
PHOTO: X

India-China relations improve

The thaw in relations comes at a time when there's growing friction between India and the US after President Donald Trump slapped steep tariffs on Indian goods, citing New Delhi's imports of Russian energy, among other reasons.

India has decried the tariffs as "unjustified and unreasonable," saying the country is being unfairly singled out for buying Russian oil while the US and the EU continue to purchase goods from Russia.

Modi's government said it would "take all necessary steps to protect its national interests," and has also not signaled any intention to cut back purchases of Russian crude.

Shankar said while US is an important strategic and economic partner, its actions have introduced an element of uncertainty about the India-US relationship.

Modi, Putin to meet soon?

In a flurry of diplomatic activity, Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar on Tuesday also embarked on a three-day visit to Moscow.

"The visit aims to further strengthen the longstanding and time-tested India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic partnership," India's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

And on Wednesday, a Russian embassy official in New Delhi said Moscow will continue to supply oil to India and that Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet Modi in New Delhi by end of year.

He stressed that India's crude oil imports from Russia will remain at the same level, noting that Moscow has a "very, very special mechanism" to continue oil supplies to the South Asian nation.

"Dissuading the Trump administration has been the most challenging and difficult task for India's diplomats. The rising engagement with China need not be seen as a response to this, but India is taking easy steps which were made difficult by its over-reliance or optimism vis-à-vis the US," said Aravind Yelery, a China expert and associate professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

India's attempt at balancing geopolitical ties

Harsh Pant, vice president of Studies and Foreign Policy at Observer Research Foundation, a think tank, said India engaging with China, or Russia, or the SCO should not be seen primarily through the lens of what is happening between India and the Trump administration.

"There is certainly a 'Trump factor' there, but I do not think it is the dominant one. India has always maintained its position of engaging with these countries independently of its engagement with the US," Pant told DW.

"Insofar as Russia is concerned, India's relationship with Russia has been longstanding. And despite Ukraine, we did not see any attempt by India to dilute that relationship or to dismiss its partnership with Russia, though the West was at one point very annoyed with India," said Pant.

Despite the ongoing friction, Bisaria said it's in India's interest to continue pursuing smooth ties and a trade deal with the Trump administration. "However, at a point when both India's leadership and public are questioning the reliability of the US as a friend, the historical 'hesitations' will likely resurface in its dealings, influencing India's diplomatic approach." *—DW News*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR

Inside the facility where ICE trains for deportation

At an obstacle course in the humid Georgia heat, an instructor shows recruits how to pull a wounded partner out of danger.

In a classroom with desks cluttered with thick legal books about immigration law, recruits learn about how the Fourth Amendment governs their work. And on a firing range littered with shell casings, new recruits for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) practice shooting their handguns.

"Instructors, give me a thumbs up when students are ready to go," a voice over the loudspeaker said before a group of about 20 ICE recruits practiced drawing and firing their weapons.

Federal Law Enforcement Training Centre in Brunswick, Georgia, is the epicentre of training for almost all federal law enforcement officers, including the Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers who are at the centre of President Donald Trump's mass deportation efforts.

Now, with lots of money approved by Congress this summer starting to flow into ICE, the agency is in midst of a huge hiring effort as it aims to get thousands of new deportation officers into the field in the coming months.

On Thursday, AP and other news organisations got a rare look at the Basic Immigration Law Enforcement Training Program that new ICE recruits — specifically those in the Enforcement and Removal Operations unit responsible for finding, arresting and removing people from the country — go through and what they learn.

Ramping up hiring, training

ICE is getting USD 76.5 billion in new money from Congress to help it meet Trump's mass deportation goal. That's nearly 10 times the agency's current annual budget. Nearly $30 billion of that money is for new staff.

They're hiring across the agency, including investigators and lawyers, but the numbers they're hiring in those areas pale in comparison to how many deportation officers are coming on board. Todd Lyons, the acting director of ICE, was at the training demonstration Thursday. He said the agency currently has about 6,500 deportation officers and is aiming to hire 10,000 more by the end of the year.

With that hiring surge have come concerns that vetting or training of new recruits will be shortchanged. The Border Patrol went through a similar hiring surge in the early 2000s when hiring and training standards were changed; arrests for employee misconduct rose. Lyons pushed back on concerns that ICE might cut corners when it comes to training.

What does the training look like?

During the six-days-a-week training, new recruits live on the grounds of the sprawling facility, which is covered with pine forests and sits near the Atlantic Ocean a little less than an hour's drive north of the Florida state line. Hundreds have gone through the training here in recent months.

During the course, new recruits train on firearms in a large indoor shooting range that looks as big as a football field. On Thursday, the floor was littered with spent shell casings as roughly 20 new recruits practiced shooting from a bent-elbow position and transitional shooting — involving transferring their guns from one hand to another. Instructors walked behind them, giving them instruction.

Dean Wilson, who oversees the firearms training, compared some of the operations that ICE agents face to a haunted house where they don't know what might be coming at them.

In a big field with various driving tracks and courses, they also train on driving techniques — how to recover from a skid on wet roads or how to navigate a winding course similar to an urban environment where they have to come to a full stop or navigate blind corners.

The curriculum also includes de-escalation techniques designed to prevent the use of force in the first place, Lyons said.

Learning the law and the Fourth Amendment

Not all of the training is in the field. ICE agents like to point out that when it comes to complexity, immigration law is second only to the tax code.

At the training academy, they get about 12 hours of classroom instruction on things like the Fourth Amendment — the part of the Constitution that protects against unreasonable searches and seizures — and Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which has evolved over the decades and governs all facets of immigration. Those legal lessons are also interspersed throughout the training.

On the desks in one classroom are training manuals and immigration law handbooks roughly two to three inches thick. Recruits learn about how to determine if someone is removable from the country, under what circumstances they can go into someone's house to search and when they have to leave.

ICE staff pushed back on accusations that they are indiscriminately pulling people over or setting up checkpoints in Washington, DC, or elsewhere as part of immigration enforcement. *—PTI*

ICE is getting USD 76.5 billion in new money from Congress to help it meet Trump's mass deportation goal
PHOTO: WIKICOMMONS

Immigrant workers from Central Asia find hostility, violence in Russia

The immigrant worker from Uzbekistan entered the bank in Moscow, but when he reached the teller, she refused to serve him and she wouldn't say why.

For him and others from impoverished countries across Central Asia who seek better lives in Russia, such hostility is woven into everyday life. Sometimes it bursts into outright violence.

"Mostly you notice it when you go to the hospital, a clinic, a government office: You stand in line and everyone shoots you dirty looks," said the man, who spoke to AP on condition of anonymity because he feared repercussions.

Such xenophobia clashes with economic realities at a time when Russia has a labour shortage, primarily due to its war in Ukraine. In the first quarter of 2025, over 20 per cent of Russian businesses said they were hindered by a lack of workers, according to the Central Bank.

But rather than welcoming labourers, Russian officials are fomenting anti-migrant sentiment and increasing restrictions on immigrants, which the government says number 6.1 million, but is probably higher.

The government is tracking their movement, clamping down on their employment and impeding their children's rights to education.

A backlash against immigrants

The continued crackdown comes as a trial began this month for four Tajik nationals who are accused of the shooting and arson attack at a Moscow concert hall in March 2024 that killed 149 people.

The four were arrested within hours of the attack and appeared in court with signs of being severely beaten. An Islamic State group claimed responsibility but Russia sought to blame Ukraine for the bloodshed.

Anti-migrant rhetoric had been growing in Russia since the early 2020s. But the massacre in particular launched a wave of "terrible violence" against immigrants, said lawyer Valentina Chupik, who has worked with the immigrant community for over 20 years.

In the eight days after the killings, she received 700 reports of injuries to immigrants, including "faces smashed against the doors of police stations," she said.

Parliament speaker Vyacheslav Volodin captured the public mood after the massacre, saying "migration control is extremely important" to ensure foreign nationals carrying out "illegal activity" could be deported without a court order.

In the first quarter of 2025, over 20 per cent of Russian businesses said they were hindered by a lack of workers, according to the Central Bank
PHOTO: FREEPIK

The violence drew concern from human rights groups.

Raids, roundups and restrictions

While some violence has subsided, it hasn't disappeared. In April, police raided a Kyrgyz-run bathhouse in Moscow with video showing masked men forcing half-naked bathers to crawl across the floor and deliberately stepping on them before covering the lens of a security camera.

Police also reportedly rounded up immigrants in raids on warehouses, construction sites and mosques, then coerced them into joining the military to fight in Ukraine. Some are threatened with having their residency documents withheld, while others are recently naturalised citizens who failed to register for military service.

In such cases, serving in the military is presented as the only alternative to prison or deportation. For others, a fast track to Russian citizenship is offered as an incentive for enlisting.

Speaking in St Petersburg in May, Alexander Bastrykin, head of Russia's Investigative Committee, said "20,000 young' citizens of Russia, who for some reason do not like living in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan (and) Kyrgyzstan" were serving in Ukraine.

Those immigrants who have avoided violence still are subject to new anti-migrant laws. Much of this is targeted specifically toward immigrants from Central Asia.

A nationwide law banned children of immigrants from attending school unless they could prove they could speak Russian. Less than six weeks after the law came into force, officials told local media that only 19 per cent of children who applied for the language test were able to take it, and the most common reason for rejection was incomplete or inaccurate documents.

Another man from Uzbekistan who has worked in Russia for almost two decades and lives in St Petersburg said he's had to wait in line for over seven hours to get needed residency documents.

The man, who also spoke to AP on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals, hopes to stay in Russia but says the climate for immigrants has worsened.

Encouraging anti-migrant sentiment

Anti-migrant sentiment is unlikely to diminish anytime soon, mostly because it's encouraged by authorities like the Investigative Committee's Bastrykin, who said immigrants "physically occupy our territory, not just with their ideology but with specific buildings" — referring to sites such as mosques.

Ultra-nationalist lawmaker Leonid Slutsky said immigrant workers "behave aggressively, causing conflicts and potentially dangerous situations."

Migrants are an easy scapegoat for many social ills, and not just in Russia, said Caress Schenk, an associate professor of political science at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan.

A surge of "anti-migrant propaganda" has dwarfed previous rhetoric of recent years, according to the Moscow-based Uzbek immigrant who was ignored by the bank teller.

Such anti-migrant rhetoric has become part of the nationalist narrative from President Vladimir Putin and others used to justify the 2022 invasion of Ukraine — that Russia is under constant threat.

"Russia has started lumping together all of the external enemies' that it's created over the years for itself: the migrants, the Ukrainians, the West," said Tajik journalist Sher Khashimov, who focuses on migration, identity and social issues.

"Special barriers are created that migrants cannot pass through on their own." *—PTI*

Nvidia in talks with Trump on new chip for China

BANGKOK, 22 AUG

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang announced that the company is in talks with the Trump administration regarding a new computer chip, the "B30A," intended for AI data centres in China. "I'm offering a new product to China for ... AI data centres, the follow-on to H20," Huang stated. However, he noted, "That's not our decision to make. It's up to, of course, the United States government." The B30A, less powerful than Nvidia's current top chips, is said to operate at half the speed of the B300 models restricted from sale to China. Following a recent suspension, Huang commended the administration for allowing H20 chip sales, which now incur a 15 per cent tax. He assured that H20 chips pose "no security backdoors," addressing Chinese concerns over potential security risks. *—PTI*

Colombia: 17 dead in car bomb & chopper attack

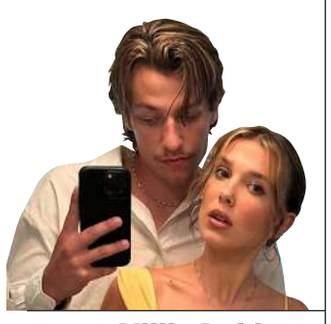
BOGOTÁ, 22 AUG

A car bomb and a helicopter attack in Colombia have resulted in the deaths of at least 17 people, authorities confirmed on Thursday. President Gustavo Petro attributed both incidents to dissidents of the defunct Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The helicopter attack, which targeted a flight transporting police personnel to an area in Antioquia to eradicate coca leaf crops, resulted in the deaths of 12 police officers. The initial reports from President Petro indicated eight fatalities, but Antioquia Governor Andrés Julián later confirmed that four additional officers had succumbed to their injuries, while three others remain hospitalised. The helicopter was reportedly struck by a drone, causing a fire, as it flew over coca fields. Meanwhile, in Cali, a car loaded with explosives detonated near a military aviation school, killing five and injuring over 30. *—PTI*

Aus doc who filmed 4,500 videos in restroom gets bails

MELBOURNE, 22 AUG

A trainee surgeon, Ryan Cho, 28, was released on bail after being charged with secretly recording hundreds of medical colleagues in Australian hospitals' restrooms. Authorities allege he filmed 4,500 intimate videos across three Melbourne hospitals since 2021, facing around 500 charges. Justice James Elliott stipulated Cho must reside with his parents, who posted a A$50,000 surety. Prosecutors raised concerns about his potential flight risk due to limited ties to Australia after losing his job. Cho's lawyer, Julian McMahon, dismissed fears of witness interference, stating, "There's a sense here that if my client were to engage in the criminal offense of interfering with witnesses that it wouldn't affect the outcome of the case." Cho has yet to enter his pleas. *—PTI*



Millie Bobby Brown, Jake adopt daughter

LOS ANGELES, 22 AUG

Millie Bobby Brown, renowned for her role in 'Stranger Things', and Jake Bongiovi have announced the adoption of their first child, a daughter. The couple, who married in a private ceremony in 2024 after their engagement in 2023, shared the joyous news in a concise statement on their Instagram accounts. Brown, 21, is eagerly awaiting the release of the fifth and final season of 'Stranger Things' in November, while also being known for her roles in two 'Godzilla' films and 'Enola Holmes'. *—PTI*

Former Sri Lankan president Ranil Wickremesinghe is producd in a court by the police in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Lanka's ex-Prez Ranil arrested for misuse of funds

This is the 1st time an ex-Lankan head is jailed

COLOMBO, 22 AUG

Former Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe was arrested on Friday for allegedly misusing state funds during his tenure as head of state, police confirmed.

Wickremesinghe, 76, was taken into custody at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) headquarters in Colombo, where he had been summoned to record a statement regarding the alleged misuse of government resources.

He was later produced before a magistrates' court.

The allegations stem from a trip to the United Kingdom in September 2023, where Wickremesinghe attended a convocation ceremony of his wife, Professor Maithree.

It is alleged that he diverted public funds to cover this private engagement, during a return leg from an official visit to the United States.

According to BBC Sinhala, the former president undertook 23 foreign trips during his two-year presidency (2022–2024), at an estimated cost of over SLRs 600 million (USD 2 million).

This marks the first time a former Sri Lankan head of state has been arrested.

Wickremesinghe, a veteran politician and lawyer, served six terms as Prime Minister and was known for his steady leadership during Sri Lanka's 2022 economic crisis.

He took over the presidency after Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation and completed the remainder of his term until late 2024.

Despite his long-standing political career — first elected to Parliament in 1977 — Wickremesinghe lost his seat in the 2020 general elections. However, he returned via the UNP's single national list slot. In the 2024 presidential election, he was defeated by Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

Wickremesinghe, nephew of Sri Lanka's first executive president Junius Jayewardene, held several key cabinet roles over decades, including Education, Youth Affairs, and Foreign Affairs. His party, the United National Party (UNP), has seen a significant decline in recent years. *—PTI*

Tsunami alert on as 7.5 quake rocks Atlantic

BUENOS AIRES, 22 AUG

A powerful 7.5-magnitude earthquake struck the South Atlantic Ocean late on Thursday, prompting a tsunami advisory for parts of Antarctica, according to Chilean authorities. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) reported the quake occurred at 11.16 pm local time, about 710km southeast of Ushuaia, Argentina, in the Drake Passage. It had a depth of 10.8 kilometres.

Though no immediate evacuation orders were issued for Chile or Argentina, the two nations closest to the epicentre, authorities remain on alert. There were no initial reports of damage or casualties due to the quake's remote location.

The Drake Passage, connecting the South Atlantic and South Pacific oceans between South America's southern tip and the Antarctic Peninsula, is a geologically active region, although less quake-prone than Chile's main coastline.

The incident follows a massive 8.8-magnitude earthquake on July 30 in Russia's Far East that triggered tsunami waves reaching Japan and Alaska, prompting widespread alerts across Hawaii, the Americas, and the South Pacific *—PTI*

UN declares full-blown famine in Gaza

GAZA CITY, 22 AUG

The world's leading authority on food crises has declared that Gaza City is now gripped by famine, with the catastrophic hunger likely to spread across the Gaza Strip without a ceasefire and lifting of humanitarian aid restrictions. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) warned that famine could extend to southern areas including Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis by the end of September.

The IPC report marks the first official famine declaration in the Middle East, attributing the crisis to ongoing Israeli military offensives, a blockade on aid, widespread displacement, and the collapse of local food production after nearly two years of conflict. More than half a million Palestinians—about a quarter of Gaza's population—face life-threatening hunger, with many at risk of death from malnutrition and disease.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denies famine claims, calling reports "lies" promoted by Hamas, while Israel's military agency overseeing aid deliveries rejected the report as "false and biased." However, aid workers in Gaza describe severe malnutrition and deteriorating health, especially among children.

'GAZA WILL BE DESTROYED'

Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz warned Gaza City could be destroyed if Hamas refuses Israel's terms, as the military prepares to escalate its offensive to seize the enclave. Katz compared Gaza City's fate to areas like Rafah, devastated earlier in the war.

Netanyahu has authorised a major operation to crush Hamas and secure the release of hostages held since October 2023. A ceasefire proposal from Arab mediators remains unconfirmed amid political divisions. Aid groups warn the offensive will worsen Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe, with no safe evacuation options for civilians. *—PTI*

Palestinians rush to collect humanitarian aid packages airdropped by parachutes into Deir al-Balah, in Gaza Strip **PHOTO: PTI**

Thai ex-PM acquitted in royal defamation case

BANGKOK, 22 AUG

Former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been acquitted of royal defamation, a charge that carried up to 15 years in prison. Leaving court on Friday, the 76-year-old simply said, "Dismissal."

Thaksin's lawyer, Winyat Chatmontree, confirmed the Bangkok Criminal Court found the evidence and witness testimonies too weak to support a conviction.

The court also ruled the prosecution's interpretation of Thaksin's 2015 comments in South Korea lacked context and may have been politically biased.

Charged in 2016 under Thailand's strict lese majeste laws, among the harshest in the world—the case stalled as Thaksin was in exile. He returned in 2023 after the Pheu Thai party, closely tied to him, took power.

He briefly served part of an eight-year prison sentence before being moved to a hospital and later pardoned.

Thaksin's opponents, largely royalists, have long accused him of corruption and undermining the monarchy. *—PTI*

No more foreign truckers in US

WASHINGTON, 22 AUG

The United States will immediately stop issuing work visas for commercial truck drivers, Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced, citing safety concerns and the impact on American truckers' jobs.

Rubio highlighted "the increasing number of foreign drivers operating large tractor-trailer trucks on US roads," saying this trend endangers lives. The decision follows a fatal 12 August accident in St Lucie County, Florida, where three people died after an illegal U-turn by a truck driver.

The driver, **Harjinder Singh**, 28, of Indian origin, is now facing three counts of vehicular homicide.

Singh reportedly entered the US illegally via the Mexico border in 2018 and obtained commercial driver's licences in California and Washington, despite undocumented status. *—PTI*

US military shuttle goes on secret mission

Cape Canaveral, 22 Aug

A US military mini shuttle launched on Thursday night aboard a SpaceX rocket to conduct classified experiments in space. The unmanned X-37B, operated by the US Space Force, will test laser communications and GPS-free navigation. It marks the eighth mission for the Boeing-built, reusable space plane, which is 9 metres long with a 4.5-metre wingspan. Flight duration remains undisclosed; past missions have lasted from months to over a year. *—PTI*

FBI raids ex-Trump aide Bolton after he slams tariffs

WASHINGTON, 22 AUG

The FBI is searching the Maryland home of former Trump administration national security adviser John Bolton as part of an investigation into the handling of classified documents, a person familiar with the matter said Friday.

Bolton served as Trump's third national security adviser for 17 months and clashed with him over Iran, Afghanistan and North Korea. The first Trump administration had unsuccessfully sought to block the publication of a Bolton book that it said contained classified information. On his first day back in office this year, Trump revoked Bolton's security clearances. *—PTI*

Bolsonaro received $5M every year?

BRASILIA, 22 AUG

- Most of the funds allegedly came via over 1.2 million PIX transactions. Bolsonaro reportedly spent similar sums on investments, transfers & currency exchanges

Brazil's federal police accuse former President Jair Bolsonaro of receiving over 30 million reais ($5 million) without clear justification between March 2023 and February 2024, suspecting money laundering, according to documents seen by the Associated Press.

Most of the funds allegedly came via over 1.2 million PIX transactions. Bolsonaro reportedly spent similar sums on investments, transfers, and currency exchanges. Police claim he and his son Eduardo used complex financial manoeuvres to conceal sources of funding, including for Eduardo's activities abroad.

The findings, linked to a 170-page obstruction of justice probe, were submitted to Brazil's Supreme Court. Bolsonaro, currently under house arrest, is also facing trial over an alleged coup plot, with a verdict expected between 2–12 September. Police say Bolsonaro considered seeking asylum in Argentina in 2024. His lawyers deny he planned to flee or breached house arrest conditions. *—PTI*

6 dead in NYC Legionnaires' outbreak

NEW YORK, 22 AUG

A sixth death has been linked to the ongoing Legionnaires' disease outbreak in Central Harlem, New York City health officials confirmed Thursday. The person died earlier this month outside the city, with the case identified during the health department's investigation.

The total number of confirmed cases now stands at 111, with seven people currently hospitalised, down from 14 on Monday. The outbreak began in late July.

Health authorities have traced the source to 12 contaminated cooling towers across 10 buildings, including a city-run hospital and sexual health clinic. All towers have since undergone remediation.

Legionnaires' disease is a severe form of pneumonia caused by Legionella bacteria, which thrive in warm water and spread through building water systems, particularly in cooling towers. Symptoms typically appear within two to 14 days of exposure and include cough, fever, headaches, muscle aches, and shortness of breath.

- Legionnaires' disease is a severe form of pneumonia caused by Legionella bacteria, which thrive in warm water and spread through building water systems, particularly in cooling towers.

AS BIG AS CHICAGO

China builds world's largest solar farm

TALATAN, 22 AUG

China is racing to complete what will be the world's largest solar farm, spanning 610 sq km, roughly the size of Chicago, on the Tibetan plateau. The mega-project aims to power 5 million homes and help China meet its climate goals.

Solar panels already cover two-thirds of the site, with power flowing from completed sections. The project, featuring over 7 million panels, is part of a rapid expansion that saw China install 212 gigawatts of solar capacity in the first half of 2025, surpassing the US's entire 2024 total.

A new study reports China's carbon emissions fell 1 per cent in the first six months of 2025, suggesting a structural decline rather than a temporary dip due to economic slowdown. Energy demand grew 3.7 per cent, but clean energy, particularly solar, wind, and nuclear, more than kept pace.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, called it a "moment of global significance." However, he warned that China must cut emissions by 3 per cent annually to meet its 2060 carbon neutrality target.

Despite progress, coal remains a key obstacle. China's grid is still structured around the steady output of coal-fired plants, complicating the integration of variable solar and wind power. Massive transmission projects are underway to carry power from the west to industrial centres in the east.

Still, the farm's ecological benefits are notable. Solar panels reduce dust and support vegetation growth, allowing villagers to graze "photovoltaic sheep" beneath them—a "win-win," local offi-

Lil Nas held after roaming streets in underwear

LOS ANGELES, 22 AUG

Rapper Lil Nas X was arrested Thursday morning in Los Angeles after allegedly charging at police officers responding to reports of a nearly naked man walking along Ventura Boulevard in Studio City.

The 26-year-old artiste, whose real name is Montero Lamar Hill, was taken into custody on suspicion of misdemeanour obstruction of an officer. Police transported him to a hospital first, suspecting a drug overdose. He was later released from hospital and booked at Valley Jail in Van Nuys, near the scene.

Los Angeles Police spokesman Officer Charles Miller said officers encountered Hill shortly before 6am after receiving reports of a man walking the busy street in only underwear and boots. A video obtained by TMZ appears to show Hill in that state.

No update was given on his medical condition. Representatives for Lil Nas X have not responded to requests for comment.

The Atlanta-born rapper shot to fame with his 2018 smash hit 'Old Town Road', which topped the Billboard Hot 100 for a record-breaking 19 weeks. His 2021 debut album 'Montero' reached No 2 on the Billboard 200 and earned a Grammy nomination for Album of the Year. *—PTI*

Gold declines by Rs 250 to Rs 1,00,370/10g

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Gold prices fell Rs 250 to Rs 1,00,370 per 10g in the national capital on Friday amid a weak global trend, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,00,620 per 10g on Thursday. In the national capital, gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped Rs 150 to Rs 1,00,050 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) on Friday. It had settled at Rs 1,00,200 per 10g in the preceding session. However, silver prices rallied by Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,15,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Friday. Spot gold was trading 0.25 per cent lower at USD 3,330.48 per ounce in New York. Spot silver went down by 0.48 per cent at USD 37.96 per ounce. *—PTI*

Rupee falls by 27P, closes at 87.52 against USD

MUMBAI, 22 AUG

The rupee fell 27 paise to close at 87.52 (provisional) against the greenback on Friday as domestic equity markets ended weaker and the US dollar strengthened ahead of the speech of Fed Chairman Jerome Powell. However, inflow of foreign funds and a drop in Brent crude prices supported the domestic unit at lower level. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 87.37 against the greenback and traded in the range of 87.32-87.55 before settling at 87.52 (provisional), down 27 paise from its previous close. The rupee pared initial gains on Thursday to settle lower by 18 paise at 87.25 against the greenback. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, zgained 0.11 per cent to 98.72. *—PTI*

Cohort plan to boost Kerala startups in Gulf

T'PURAM, 22 AUG

The Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) has introduced a Supply Chain and Logistics track within its 2025 Industry Cohort Programme, in partnership with its Middle Eastern counterpart. This initiative aims to assist as many as ten promising Indian startups in breaking into the dynamic logistics and trade markets of the UAE and the wider Gulf region. Partnering with the Transworld Group, KSUM plans to foster innovation through pilot projects, partnerships, and investment opportunities with leading regional logistics firms. The programme focuses on areas such as digital freight platforms, AI-driven supply chain visibility, and last-mile delivery solutions. KSUM CEO Anoop Ambika remarked, "This flagship market acceleration initiative bridges startups with strategic business opportunities, mentorship, and sector-specific collaboration in the region." *—PTI*

Asheesh Kumar appointed as Coal India's director

KOLKATA, 21 AUG

Asheesh Kumar assumed charge as Director (Business Development) of state-owned Coal India Limited (CIL), the miner said on Friday. He is the second executive to hold this post after Debasish Nanda, who retired in June, CIL said in a statement. The position of Director (Business Development) was created in July 2022, when Nanda first stepped into the role. Before his elevation to the CIL board, Kumar was serving as the officer on special duty in the coal ministry. He was also the director of CIL Navikarniya Urja Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary set up in April 2021. At CIL, Kumar spearheaded the miner's foray into the critical minerals business both domestically and abroad, while also contributing to its broader diversification agenda, the company said. *—PTI*

OpenAI to set up its first India office this year

OpenAI highlighted India as a leading country for AI adoption

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

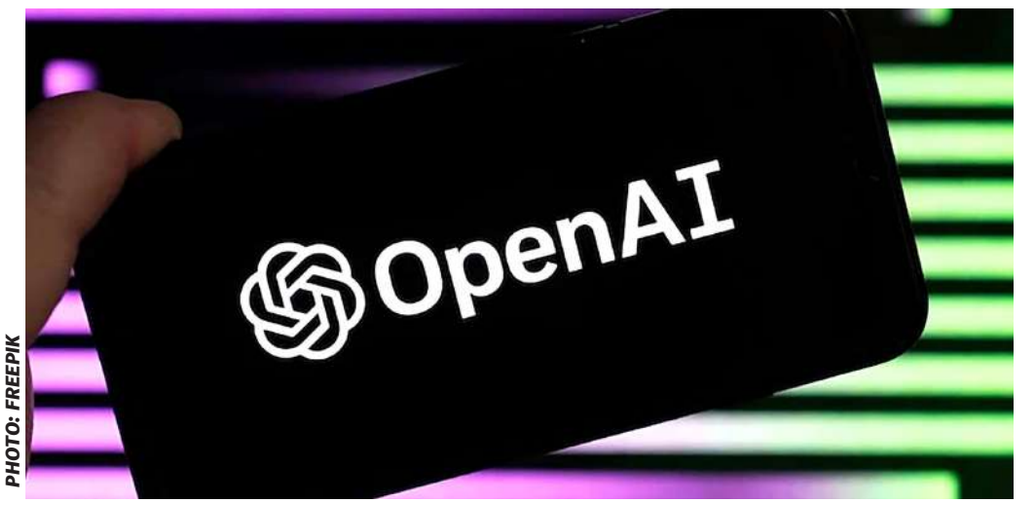


PHOTO: FREEPIK

OpenAI on Friday said it will set up its first India office in New Delhi later this year, underlining the swift uptake of its AI tools in a market that is ChatGPT's second-largest after the US and among its fastest-growing.

OpenAI said it has officially established an entity in India and has begun hiring a dedicated local team.

Opening an office in India reflects OpenAI's support for IndiaAI mission and commitment to partnering with the government to build AI for India, with India, it said in a statement.

The move will also enable OpenAI to better serve its users in India, including millions of students, educators, professionals, and developers who use its tools to learn, be more creative, and solve problems for themselves and others.

This expansion, it said, underscores India's global leadership in AI, its thriving ecosystem, and the growing demand for OpenAI's advanced tools among people, developers, and businesses across the country.

Data cited by OpenAI highlighted India as a leading country for AI adoption.

Weekly active users of ChatGPT in India increased more than four times in just the past year.

The country also ranks among the top five developer markets globally on the OpenAI platform.

India also has the largest population of students on ChatGPT worldwide.

The local team will also focus on strengthening relationships with local partners, governments, businesses, developers, and academic institutions.

Today's news follows recent announcements of initiatives developed for the India market, including ChatGPT Go, OpenAI Academy, enhanced Indic language support, among others.

Local businesses and institutions across India are already using OpenAI's tools to tackle critical challenges, such as AI-powered agricultural services, streamlined recruitment, and effective governance tools, the company said.

Looking ahead, OpenAI will host its first Education Summit in India this month. Later this year, OpenAI will host its first Developer Day in India. *—PTI*

FRAMEWORK FOR REGULATION

Govt mulls enforcing prohibition clauses for Gaming Bill

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

PHOTO: PTI

The government is considering enforcing the 'prohibition clauses' first up, ahead of other sections, once the Online Gaming Bill gets President's nod and is notified, IT Secretary S Krishnan has said, adding that work has, meanwhile, already commenced on drafting rules for the other provisions of the legislation.

Krishnan told PTI in an interview that the proposed rules in the works will provide a framework for promotion and regulation of e-sports and online social games, as well as the constitution of the regulatory authority envisaged in the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025.

Parliament has passed the bill to ban all forms of games played with money, and promote e-sports and online social gaming, with the Rajya Sabha on Thursday approving it without debate amid din.

The government has asserted that online money gaming has become a serious social and public health issue, causing demonstrable negative impact on society. At the same time, the Centre has thrown its weight behind promoting e-sports and social gaming, and wants to position India as a global hub for game development.

"There is a social evil (around online money games) that the government has wanted to address (through the Bill)...And I think we need to respect that sentiment and make sure that we are able to do whatever work we need to do at the backend much more quickly," Krishnan said.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT is gearing up for fast implementation once the presidential nod comes through. *—PTI*

SNAPS 6-DAY RALLY

Markets fall sharply by nearly 1%

MUMBAI, 22 AUG

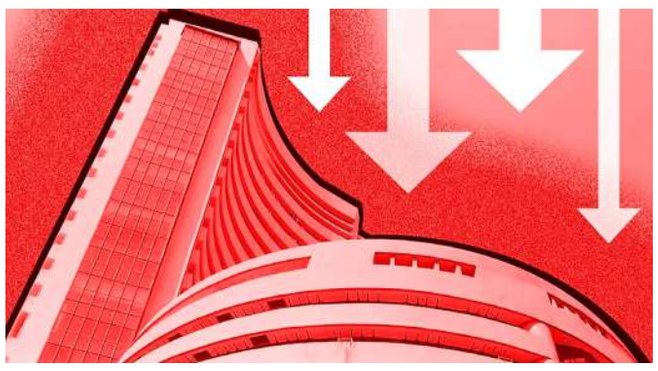


PHOTO: FREEPIK

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty fell sharply by nearly 1 per cent on Friday, snapping their six-day winning streak, amid intense selling in market heavyweights HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 693.86 points or 0.85 per cent to settle at 81,306.85. During the day, it plunged 708.94 points or 0.86 per cent to 81,291.77.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 213.65 points or 0.85 per cent to 24,870.10.

From the Sensex pack, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Tata Steel, ITC, HCL Tech, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Adani Ports, Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank and Tech Mahindra were among the major laggards.

However, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti, Bharat Electronics and Sun Pharma were among the gainers.

Investors also turned their attention towards US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's forthcoming statements at the Jackson Hole Symposium.

In the six-day rally to Thursday, the BSE benchmark has climbed 1,765 points or 2.14 per cent, and the Nifty rallied 596 points or 2.4 per cent. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,246.51 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.24 per cent to USD 67.52 a barrel.

On Thursday, the Sensex climbed 142.87 points or 0.17 per cent to settle at 82,000.71. The Nifty rose by 33.20 points or 0.13 per cent to 25,083.75. *—PTI*

X reaches settlement over $500M lawsuit of former staff

SAN FRANCISCO, 22 AUG

Elon Musk's X has reached a tentative settlement with former employees of the company then known as Twitter who'd sued for USD 500 million in severance pay.

The parties disclosed the deal in a Wednesday court filing asking for a scheduled 17 September hearing in the case to be postponed. The San Francisco federal appeals court on Thursday agreed to postpone the hearing so that both sides could finalise the settlement agreement.

The terms of the settlement were not disclosed. The proposed class action lawsuit by former Twitter employees Courtney McMillan and Ronald Cooper, who said the company failed to pay them and other fired workers severance they were owed.

Musk took over the social media platform in 2022 and let thousands of employees go, eliminating entire teams dedicated to trust and safety, human rights and making the site accessible to people with disabilities.

Musk's drawn-out legal battles with more than 2,000 former Twitter workers were a precursor to the court battles the Trump administration is now fighting over federal downsizing. *—PTI*

Elon Musk
PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: PTI

KUMARASWAMY CHAIRS HMT WATCHES MEETING

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Union minister **HD Kumaraswamy** on Friday chaired a review meeting to discuss the performance and future road-map of HMT Watches, with deliberations focused on strengthening operations in a bid to preserve the legacy of the Indian watch brand.

HMT Limited, a central public sector enterprise, comes under the administrative control of the Heavy Industries Ministry.

It has two manufacturing units, food processing machinery unit, Aurangabad and auxiliary business division, Bengaluru.

The Food Processing Machinery Unit manufactures a variety of machinery for milk processing and other food processing applications. It also takes up turn-key projects for milk processing industries.

The Auxiliary Business Unit has taken up assembly and sale of watches and clocks in order to keep HMT watches heritage alive and encash the brand equity. *—PTI*

B'luru startup announces India's 1st MALE combat aircraft

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Flying Wedge Defence and Aerospace (FWDA), AI warfare and autonomous combat aircraft company, announced on Friday India's first indigenous, export-ready Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) autonomous combat aircraft.

At the launch event held here, Suhas Tejaskanda, Founder & CEO of FWDA said with shifting global policies and tightened US regulations, India cannot afford digital dependency during wartime.

"Dependence on foreign systems could limit India's strategic autonomy, as sensitive operational data may be routed through external networks and remain accessible to overseas agencies," he added.

Inspired by Kaala Bhairav, the eternal guardian of time, the platform is designed, developed and manufactured entirely in India, added a press note.

The aircraft is engineered to deliver an endurance of up to 30 hours and a range of 3,000 km, according to Tejaskanda.

At the event, after the video screening of the test flight, the company announced that the platform has secured a landmark export order from a South Asian nation of USD 25 million as a part of a USD 30 million total strategic deal."This development showcases the world's growing reliance on Indian innovation to secure their skies and positions India as a leading defence innovator and trusted supplier of advanced AI warfare platforms," said Tejaskanda.

According to him, for decades, India has relied on foreign systems like Predator and Israeli Searcher models, but at a high strategic cost, from embedded kill-switch vulnerabilities to critical flight data routed through external servers.

He said 10 Kaala Bhairavs can match the reconnaissance power of a single Predator at a fraction of the cost. *—PTI*

Sebi warns against fraudulent trading schemes

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Sebi on Friday cautioned investors against fraudulent trading schemes being promoted through social media messages or mobile applications falsely claiming to provide stock market access through foreign portfolio investors (FPIs).

In its cautionary statement, Sebi warned that such schemes are illegal and not endorsed by the regulator.

The regulator asked investors to exercise caution when encountering messages on platforms or other apps that claim to offer stock market access through FPIs or foreign institutional investors.

Investors have been advised "to be wary of misleading claims such as institutional trading accounts, IPOs at discounted prices, guaranteed allotments in IPOs, opportunities to participate in anchor book and block trades at discounted rates".

The regulator reminded investors that the FPI investment route is not available to resident Indians, except in limited cases as permitted under Sebi (Foreign Portfolio Investors) Regulations, 2019.

Sebi further advised investors to always verify the registration status of entities on Sebi's website and to use only authentic trading apps offered by Sebi-registered intermediaries. *—PTI*

Centre wants study on areca nut

NEW DELHI, 21 AUG

The Centre has directed scientists to conduct studies and submit an early research report on whether areca nut is non-carcinogenic, amid confusion over a WHO report on such nuts produced in Karnataka.

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan made the announcement during a high-level meeting at Krishi Bhavan on Thursday on areca nut development.

"A WHO report has created some confusion regarding the areca nuts produced in Karnataka. To dispel these misconceptions, a team of scientists from Indian Council of Agricultural Research is conducting studies, and they have been instructed to submit their report within a fixed timeframe," he said.

Chouhan said that farmers who have suffered heavy losses due to viral infections like "areolate mildew" will receive appropriate compensation from the government.

Karnataka leads in its production with 10 lakh tonnes from 6.76 lakh hectares, followed by Kerala, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, West Bengal, & Tamil Nadu. *—PTI*

ALL-TIME IN 'RICH LIST'

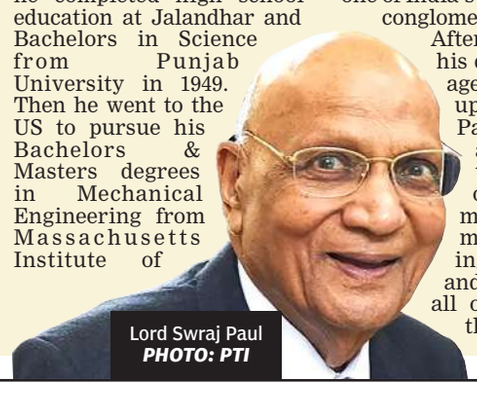
Paul leaves behind legacy in business

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

From the bylanes of Jalandhar to a regular name in the annual 'Sunday Times Rich List', Lord Swraj Paul, who died on Thursday evening in London aged 94, was one of the most well-known NRI entrepreneurs and philanthropists.

Born to Pyare Lal, who ran a small foundry used to make steel goods, including buckets and other farming equipment, Paul was exposed to business early in his life much before he went on to establish Caparo Group, a diversified businesses entity with interests predominantly in design, manufacture, marketing and distribution of value-added steel and niche engineering products.

Born on 18 February, 1931, he completed high school education at Jalandhar and Bachelors in Science from Punjab University in 1949. Then he went to the US to pursue his Bachelors & Masters degrees in Mechanical Engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). After completing his studies at MIT, he returned to India to join the family business, Apeejay Surrendra Group -- one of India's oldest business conglomerates.



Lord Swraj Paul
PHOTO: PTI

After the death of his daughter at the age of four, he set up the Ambika Paul Foundation as a charitable trust that went on to donate millions to promote the wellbeing of children and young people all over the world through education and health initiatives.

Paul laid the foundation to set up Caparo in 1968 with headquarters in London and it went on to become one of the largest steel conversion and distribution businesses in the UK.

He lost his son Angad Paul, who was Caparo Group's CEO in 2015 and his wife Aruna in 2022. After which he renamed the foundation as Aruna and Ambika Paul Foundation.

Paul is remembered for his hostile bids to take over Escorts Group & DCM Group in early 80s, which required intervention of government after legal battles. *—PTI*

Flexible inflation targeting framework beneficial: RBI

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) stated that its flexible inflation targeting (FIT) framework has effectively served the nation, particularly during turbulent times.

A recent report from the RBI noted that since the framework's introduction in 2016, inflation in India averaged around 4 per cent until 2019, emphasising its broad success in maintaining price stability.

However, the RBI acknowledged that the conduct of monetary policy faced challenges from recurring shocks to food and fuel prices, particularly following the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

"India's experience with inflation targeting is unique compared to other countries," the report highlighted, due to over half of the consumption basket being comprised of food and the energy. RBI credited successful coordination between government and central bank in addressing inflation, stating, "monetary-fiscal coordination played a crucial role in success."

Additionally, RBI confirmed the outcome of an underwriting auction for government securities totalling Rs 36,000 crore, with full subscription achieved for both the 2028 and 2035 bonds, further reinforcing stability in the government securities market. *—ANI*

PHOTO: PTI

Elavenil Valarivan strikes 10m air rifle gold

SHYMKENT, 22 AUG

Indian shooter Elavenil Valarivan clinched the gold medal in women's 10m air rifle competition of the 16th Asian Championships here on Friday with an impressively composed performance in the final. The 26-year-old from Tamil Nadu, who has multiple gold medals in World Cups and has also been a top-finisher in the World Championships, shot a score of 253.6 to finish on top in the final. The silver went to China's Xinlu Peng with a score of 253, while Korea's Eunji Kwon (231.2) took home the bronze. This was Valarivan's first individual podium finish in the ongoing event, having won a silver and a bronze in the team events previously.

Valarivan had qualified eighth for the final with a score of 630.7. Ghosh had originally finished 10th in the event with a score of 630.3.—*PTI*

Cape Town's Newlands to host next SA20 final

JOHANNESBURG, 22 AUG

The final of the upcoming SA20 league will be held at Newlands in Cape Town, with the venues at Durban, Centurion, and Johannesburg getting key playoff matches, the tournament organisers said on Friday. The fourth season of the league starts on 26 December. Durban will host a playoff match for the first time in SA20 history when the two best teams of the competition meet in Qualifier 1 on 21 January.The Highveld will play host to two crunch playoff matches, with Centurion setting the stage for the Eliminator on 22 January and the Wanderers in Johannesburg staging the decider of the second finalist with Qualifier 2 on 23 January. All SA20 champions have been crowned in front of a capacity crowd.—*PTI*

Durand Cup champions to take home ₹ 1.21 crore

KOLKATA, 22 AUG

The winners of the 134th edition of the Durand Cup will walk away with a prize money of Rs 1.21 crore, the highest champion's purse in the 137-year history of Asia's oldest football tournament.The Durand Cup Organising Committee (DCOC) announced it on the eve of the grand finale on Saturday, when defending champions NorthEast United FC clash with debutants Diamond Harbour FC at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan (VYBK). Earlier this year, the DCOC had announced a 250 percent increase in prize money.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Rower Arjun aims for LA28 after battling back injury

SRINAGAR, 22 AUG

Rower Arjun Lal Jat sports a huge 'Tokyo 2020' tattoo on his right arm, and his dream is to compete at LA28 and get another indelible ink impression just below the one he proudly flaunts on his biceps. But for that to happen, Jat will have to return to peak fitness after spending nearly two years recovering from a debilitating lower-back injury, which forced one of the most recognisable faces in the water sports circuit to miss the 2024 Paris Olympics qualifiers. The injury has left a deep scar in Jat's mind, and the Hangzhou Asian Games silver medallist wants to regain competitive fitness.—*PTI*

India can win AC under SKY's captaincy: Sehwag

Team India is in danger of losing its jersey sponsor before AC

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

SURYAKUMAR YADAV PHOTO: PTI

All the matches will be held in two venues Dubai and Abu Dhabi

Former India opener Virender Sehwag has backed the current T20I team to win the upcoming Asia Cup under Suryakumar Yadav's "fearless captaincy".

The continental tournament will be held in the UAE from 9 to 28 September.

India, who won the inaugural edition of the tournament in the T20 format in 2016, are grouped with traditional rivals Pakistan, Oman, and hosts UAE in Group A. Group B comprises Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh.

"This Indian team has the right mix of youth and experience, and under Surya's fearless leadership, they can dominate Asia once again. His attacking mindset suits the T20 format perfectly, and if the team plays with the same intent, I have no doubt India can lift the trophy," Sehwag said.

He was speaking as part of broadcaster Sony Sports Network's 'Rag Rag Mein Bharat' campaign for the upcoming tournament.

After 'The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill' was passed by both houses of parliament late on Thursday, the Indian cricket team faces the possibility of sporting a jersey without a logo at the upcoming Asia Cup, which begins in the United Arab Emirates next month.

The sweeping bill bans online fantasy sports and gambling platforms, such as Dream11, which was announced as Team India's lead sponsor in July 2023 for a period of three years.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is yet to make an official announcement regarding the future of its association with India's biggest fantasy sports gaming platform. However, the national governing body's secretary, Devajit Saikia, on Friday said that the BCCI would adhere to the laws of the country.

Sharath to replace Naidu as juniors' chief

Former Tamil Nadu batter S Sharath is set to move from the senior to the junior selection committee of the BCCI, replacing chairman Thilak Naidu, as the Board invited applications for slots that are expected to fall vacant across different panels. Naidu, a former Karnataka stumper, who has been at the helm for less than three years, is expected to vacate his position as the BCCI looks for one post in the junior selection panel. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S ODI WORLD CUP

Bengaluru's M Chinnaswamy Stadium PHOTO: PTI

Mumbai replaces B'luru as venue

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Mumbai on Friday replaced Bengaluru as one of the five venues for next month's women's ODI World Cup due to "unforeseen circumstances", the ICC announced.

The DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai will host up to five fixtures, including three league matches, a semifinal, and potentially the final, during the tournament starting 30 September. The rejig was necessitated due to the unavailability of Bengaluru's M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

"While unforeseen circumstances required us to adjust the schedule and replace a venue, we are pleased to now have a line-up of five world-class venues that will showcase the very best of the women's game.

"The stage is set, and I am confident this tournament will capture imaginations and inspire a new generation of fans," ICC Chairman Jay Shah said.

The other venues for the eight-team tournament include Guwahati, Indore, Visakhapatnam, and Colombo.

Although the ICC did not divulge the exact reasons, the change was, in all likelihood, forced by the Karnataka State Cricket Association's inability to get the necessary approvals to host the games.

The Chinnaswamy had been declared incapable of hosting big events following an inquiry into the stampede during Royal Challengers Bengaluru's IPL victory celebrations earlier this year. —*PTI*

Indian women's left-arm spinner Sultana retires

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Indian left-arm spinner Gouher Sultana has retired from all forms of cricket, saying it has been "the greatest honour" to represent the country at the highest level of the game.

The 37-year-old Sultana played 50 ODIs and 37 T20Is for India after making her debut in 2008. She last represented the country in April 2014.

Sultana, however, made a successful comeback in the 2024 and 2025 Women's Premier League seasons, representing UP Warriorz.

"To have represented India at the highest level - in World Cups, tours and battles that tested both skill and spirit - has been the greatest honour of my life," Sultana wrote in an Instagram post announcing her retirement on Thursday.

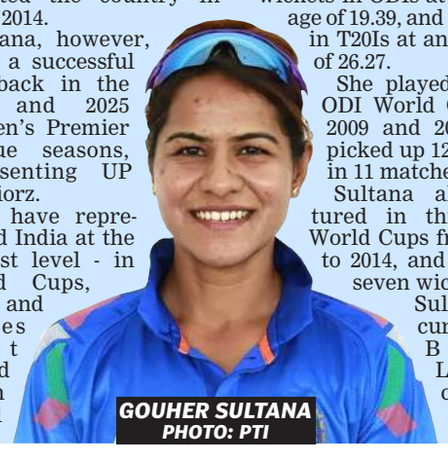
"Every wicket taken, every dive in the field, every huddle with my teammates has shaped the cricketer and the person I am today," she added.

Sultana picked up 66 wickets in ODIs at an average of 19.39, and 29 scalps in T20Is at an average of 26.27.

She played in two ODI World Cups, in 2009 and 2013, and picked up 12 wickets in 11 matches.

Sultana also featured in three T20 World Cups from 2009 to 2014, and claimed seven wickets.

Sultana is currently a BCCI Level 2 coach. —*PTI*



GOUHER SULTANA PHOTO: PTI

Heena Kang wins maiden Pro title at 11th Leg of WPGT

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Heena Kang was going great guns with eight holes left but had to quell a late charge from Lavanya Gupta to bag her maiden Pro title at the 11th leg of the Women's Pro Golf Tour, here on Friday.

Heena, who was fifth on her pro debut last month, was chased hard by amateur Lavanya at the Prestige Golfshire.

Lavanya, who started the final day two shots behind Heena, had fallen five shots behind as she was 4-over by the turn. And then there was a great charge from Lavanya, who birdied the 11th, 14th, and 16th.

PHOTO: PTI

Needing one more birdie to force a play-off, Lavanya finished par-par, the same as Heena, who emerged a winner by one shot.

Heena and Lavanya began the day with a bogey, and the latter had a second bogey on the fourth. One hole later, Heena also bogeyed, and that meant she was still two ahead of Lavanya. —*PTI*

ABBAS WILL NOT TRAVEL TO INDIA WITH MALAYSIAN TEAM

KARACHI, 22 AUG

Pakistan's legendary drag flicker Sohail Abbas, who is Malaysia's assistant coach, has decided against travelling with the hockey team for the Asia Cup in India but insisted that his decision is unrelated to the Pakistani team's absence from the tournament.

The Asia Cup men's hockey tournament will be held in Rajgir, Bihar, from 29 August to 7 September.

The competition offers a direct qualification spot for next year's World Cup, scheduled in the Netherlands and Belgium. "I am not coming for the Asia Cup, but there are some other personal reasons behind it," Abbas, widely regarded as the 'King of the Drag Flick', told PTI Bhasha from Karachi on Friday. —*PTI*

India beat B'desh 2-0 in SAFF U-17

THIMPHU, 22 AUG

A dominant India scored once in each half to blank Bangladesh 2-0 and record their second straight win in the SAFF U-17 Women's Championships here on Friday.

Pearl Fernandes (14th) and Bonifilia Shullai (76th) were the scorers for India, consolidating their top position in the group with six points from two victories.

Both sides came into the contest with a rich history of rivalry in the competition four finals contested, two titles apiece. Yet, the match never truly lived up to the expectations.

India's clinical performance ensured that Bangladesh was always playing catch-up. From the outset, the Young Tigresses looked focused and alert. —*PTI*

Fritz is back at US Open

NEW YORK, 22 AUG

As personally satisfying and career-boosting as Taylor Fritz's runner-up showing at the 2024 US Open was, he is attempting to keep that out of his mind as he goes back to Flushing Meadows.

Instead, he wants to remain rooted in the present.

"I'm honestly trying not to think about last year there," Fritz said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I want to do everything the same as I did it last time which is not looking ahead in the draw, not thinking about the end of the tournament."

When play begins Sunday at the final Grand Slam tournament of the season, Fritz should have every reason to expect big things from himself, just as American tennis fans are bound to expect big things from the 27-year-old Californian who has produced quite a 12 12-year-old.

2 of Taylor Fritz's last 4 Slam losses came against Sinner or Alcaraz

Fritz has reached a career-best No. 4 in the rankings, behind only No. 1 Jannik Sinner, No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz, and No. 3 Alexander Zverev. —*PTI*

TAYLOR FRITZ PHOTO: PTI

Bist, Joshitha lead India A's strong comeback

BRISBANE, 22 AUG

Middle-order batter Raghvi Bist hit a fighting 93 while tailender VJ Joshitha (51) produced a fine half-century to script India A's comeback in the one-off Women's unofficial Test as the visitors posted a competitive 299 before reducing Australia A to 158 for 5 on the second day of the game, here Friday.

But Bist, who was on overnight 26, first shared 64 runs with Radha Yadav (33) for the sixth wicket and then stitched a 75-run stand with Minnu Mani (28) to take India out of trouble.

Bist admirably batted with the tail and decorated her 153-ball knock with 16 boundaries before being dismissed just seven runs short of a fine century. She was cleaned up by medium pacer Maitlan Brown in the 63rd over of India's innings.

But Joshitha and Titas Sadhu (23) didn't give up and shared valuable 75 runs for the ninth wicket to take India A close to the 300-run mark. Joshitha was bowled by off-spinner Lilly Mills. She found the fence seven times during her 72-ball stay. Medium pacers Georgia Prestwidge (3/37) and Brown (3/65) shared six wickets between them for Australia A.In reply, Australia A were struggling at 158 for 5 in 43 overs. —*PTI*

RAGHVI BIST PHOTO: PTI

SC directs AIFF-FSDL to resolve future of MRA-ISL

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Supreme Court, on Friday, directed the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and the Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) to sit together and find a solution, preferably within a week.

A special bench, comprising Justice Sri PS Narasimha and Justice Joymalya Bagchi, has set the date for the next hearing on 28 August.

The AIFF and FSDL have remained at an impasse regarding the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) the administrative backbone of the Indian Super League (ISL), currently India's top flight of men's football.

The current MRA runs down in December 2025, and a lack of agreement on a future MRA has led to the 2025-26 season of ISL being put on hold on 11 July. As a result, 11 of the 13 ISL clubs look at 'catastrophic consequences' if the league does not happen, with several of them suspending operations temporarily.The apex court's decision comes as a U-turn from its earlier directive in April, when it had asked the federation to refrain from further negotiations with FSDL until it (the Supreme Court) decided on the AIFF constitution. —*PTI*

SINQUEFIELD CUP

Pragg held by Sevian; Gukesh draws with Vachier

ST. LOUIS, 22 AUG

Indian grandmaster R Praggnanadhaa was held to an easy draw by Samuel Sevian of the United States, while World Champion D Gukesh signed peace with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France in the fourth round of the Sinquefield Cup, here.

Fabiano Caruana of the United States scored his second victory in as many days, defeating Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan in the lone decisive game of the day.

In the other games, Levon Aronian of the United States drew with Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland, and French Alireza Firouzja split the point with Wesley So.

PHOTO: PTI

With five rounds still to come, Caruana shot into a sole lead on three points from four games and is followed by Praggnanandhaa and Aronian on 2.5 each.

A pack of five players, Wesley, Firouzja, Vachier-Lagrave, Sevian, and Gukesh, share the fourth spot on two points apiece.

A half point behind is Duda, while Abdusattorov is at the bottom of the tables on just a half point.

Praggnanandhaa faced the Queen's Gambit declined as white and could not pose any real problems in the way of Sevian. The middle game saw a lot of pieces change hands, and it was soon a drawn endgame on the board.

Gukesh also could not make much use of his white piece as Vachier-Lagrave put up stiff resistance in another Queen pawn game of the day.

The Queens got traded early in the game, and though it was a bit complicated, both players held on to their own. The resulting rook endgame offered little hope, with both players having a pawn each, and the draw was a just result.—*PTI*

Isak saga leaves club in 'lose-lose' situation

NEWCASTLE, 22 AUG

Newcastle United manager Eddie Howe says he has not seen or spoken to striker Alexander Isak for a week and has described the saga as a "lose-lose situation".

"He is contracted to us, he is our player," Howe said at a news conference on Friday that was dominated by questions about Isak. "My wish is that he'd be playing on Monday night with us, but he won't be, and that's regrettable at this moment.

Isak broke his silence on his discontent at Newcastle by posting a statement on Instagram, saying the club has broken promises about an agreement that would allow him to leave amid interest from Liverpool and reiterating his desire to move. Newcastle responded to Isak's outburst by saying no club official had made a commitment to let the striker leave and that it had not received a good enough offer from another team for the Sweden international. The transfer window closes on 1 Sept. Howe still believes, however, that the club can resolve its differences with Isak. "But 100% I want to see him back in a Newcastle shirt." —*PTI*

ALEXANDER ISAK PHOTO: X/@ ISAK